Community Transport in Central Sydney: Local Perspectives

Prepared by

Institute for Sustainable Futures

For

Central Sydney Community Transport

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Final Report

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Acknowledgements

Summary

This report documents a research project carried out in 2004 by the Institute for Sustainable Futures in collaboration with Central Sydney Community Transport. The research explored the following three questions:

1. *What does community transport mean for people in central Sydney?*

2. *What are the benefits of community transport?*

3. *What models of community transport are used elsewhere?*

During the project we conducted a literature review, interviewed community transport clients and local stakeholders and administered a questionnaire for people involved in operating community transport services internationally.

The research identified themes to explain what is meant by community transport for clients and service providers. It also documents benefits and examples of community transport models from overseas and locally. The findings highlight not only the benefits of community transport, but also express the difficulties and concerns relating to service provision and key issues for the sector in the future.

Community transport tends to be conceptualised in comparison with conventional public transport, principally that it is necessary to fill the gaps left by other services. Community transport is a door-to-door service, which also provides client assistance, for example, to carry shopping, or help clients get on and off the bus. The services Sydney, Australia reflect available funding and existing Home and Community Care (HACC) funding conditions.

The practical benefits include tailored transport focussed on meeting the needs of transport disadvantaged older people, those with limited mobility, and individuals with severe or mild disabilities. The ability to respond to local needs and the relationship with drivers were also practical benefits identified. Community transport also contributes to clients' independence and reduces reliance on institutional care. Socially, clients identified that the service helped them maintain friendships, and generate new ones.

Different models of community transport were analysed to develop a series of case studies. Relying on US research, we explain the fundamental aspects of a community transport provider and the links with the community (specifically the clients) and the government (where the link is often related to funding). The community transport provider consists typically of the vehicles, drivers and the administrative structure used. The US research indicates vehicles tended to be vans or small buses, drivers were usually paid but a major role is still played by volunteers. There is no uniformity in the administration of services.

Within community transport the three key different kinds of service offered are grouped as:

(i)   Demand Responsive: Individual transport (transport for an individual door-to-door or door-through-door, e.g. volunteer car drivers or special taxi services);

(ii)   Demand Responsive: Shared Transport (advance booking bus service along flexible routes, e.g. dial-a-ride or dial-a-bus,); and

(iii)   Shared Community Transport Services (usually mini-buses or vans, often equipped for accessibility, that provide services along relatively fixed routes from residential areas to a facility; most common model of small-scale community transport, used throughout the United Kingdom and Australia).

At the level of the whole transport system, the Swedish approach demonstrates that integration is essential between special transport services, community transport and public transport. That model indicates that clear delineation of clients eases integration and reduces

duplication. Local service providers look forward to their on-going involvement in enhancements of this kind here and see current initiatives (specifically from the Ministry of Transport) as generally positive in this regard.

Other key findings from the case studies are as follows:

• Drivers are key to client satisfaction and volunteer roles are generally declining;

• Special vehicles are important but can require collaboration to attain economies of scale;

• Individual transport costs can be reduced through effective shared community transport; and

• Alliances may assist with achieving:

   o Long-term commitments needed to ensure projects are effective,

   o Expanding client access to services through collaboration with other services,

   o Effective local government program involvement in local services,

   o Innovation to enhance services, e.g. IT change to reduce administrative burden.

This research and potential for future research

The emphasis on provider perspectives in this report is valuable in outlining experience and knowledge 'in the field'. Subsequently this evidence demonstrates the positive impacts of community transport on individual clients as well as the community. The interviews provide new knowledge on a topic for which relatively little information exists. This report provides analysis of community transport issues in the context of Sydney. It also has broader relevance to community transport services in other parts of Australia. Comparative studies between different areas and of individuals before and after the implementation of community transport services may provide additional insights into the benefits of the service, and could be the focus of future research.

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1   Introduction

The Institute for Sustainable Futures (the Institute), in conjunction with The University of Sydney, conducted this research for Central Sydney Community Transport (CSCT) in 2004. The purpose of the research was to contribute to public debate regarding community transport in central Sydney.

Specifically the project explored the following research questions:

1. *What does community transport mean for people in central Sydney?*

2. *What are the benefits of community transport?*

3. *What models of community transport are used elsewhere?*

The project was designed in a number of stages to address each of these questions and the research methods are described in Section 2. The following sections outline the findings of the project. Section 3 presents the stories provided by CSCT clients about their experience of the community transport service. Section 4 analyses a series of interviews with local community transport service providers in the central Sydney region alongside existing literature. The interviews explore the benefits of the service. Section 5 is based on a literature review and questionnaire with a broad range of community transport service providers. It documents community transport models used internationally. The findings from all stages are drawn together in Section 5.4 as the Project Conclusions. This section has been developed through a workshop held in consultation with the Sydney Metro Region operators at their monthly meeting in November 2004.

1.1 Background

There is a need for less mobile people within the general population to have alternative transport options aside from private transport and existing, regular public transport. The existing literature largely focuses on older people as being the key client group for community transport and places less emphasis on the needs of other groups (for example, people with mobility impairments or people who suffer ill health).

Unmet transport needs are the specific needs of residents with limited mobility, including older people and individuals with mild/severe disabilities, which remain largely 'unmet' by private transport and mainstream public transport. Unmet transport needs is a central concept in published literature and is seen as a key need addressed by community transport. The features of community transport services meeting these needs include a service-oriented ethos, local input into the service, subsidies for travel costs, and specialised service provision to meet specific client needs (Watters 1996, 21-22).

Troy (1999) points out that assumptions relating to the cost of transport, as a hindrance for elderly passengers, are inaccurate. Instead, he establishes that the primary difficulties for elderly residents include getting to particular stops, getting into vehicles and a lack of available seating on public transport. Troy (1999) also highlights that structural changes in urban planning can limit access to services creating another difficulty for less mobile, elderly residents. Public transport in the context of the current built environment and urban system does not meet the transport needs of these individuals.

Similarly, Sterns et al. (2003, p.14) discuss the need for a variety of transport services to help aged persons remain "independent and socially integrated as their functional capabilities change". Indicating that current transport structures are not adequately meeting this need. Further evidence includes a recent report on the transport needs of residents in aged care facilities (Horin, 2003). The survey, based on the responses of aged-care providers who care for more than 10,000 aged persons, found an "almost universal reliance on friends and family to provide transport" (Horin, 2003). Horin also noted that more than one-third of the residents stated that they did not have anyone to drive them to their appointments. This finding

indicates that there remains a large segment of the population whose transport needs are not being met.

Community transport addresses transport needs arising from gaps in other transport services. In her report *Going Places*, Shirley Watters argues

> *"Community transport has evolved as a means of providing service to the transport disadvantaged, filling service gaps unable to be met by conventional public and private transport services. The development of community transport in Australia is considered to have commenced in New South Wales." (Watters 1996, p.19).*

In a discussion about the social considerations of an integrated transport system for disabled people, Hine and Mitchell argue that current transport and planning practices "do not seek to understand or even to address the full range of movement and mobility constraints of different users." (2001, p.322) They argue for appropriate methods of transport planning to address the unmet needs of excluded groups (Hine and Mitchell 2001).

Existing community transport research identifies the following key issues facing the sector: regulations, funding and costing, coordination and integration, policy and planning, and future trends (Watters 1996, 23-29). These broader issues also apply at the NSW level as recent reviews indicate.

1.2 Future community transport needs

A number of reports discuss structural ageing (in a number of different forms) as an important challenge for the community transport sector in the future.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2003 survey of disability, ageing and carers found that 42% of those surveyed (people with a disability or aged over 60) need assistance with either personal activities, such as self care, mobility or health care, or assistance with everyday activities such as transport or housework. More specifically 18% of those surveyed required assistance with transport and 17% with mobility.

The importance of these figures is increased if they are considered alongside the demographic trends depicted in Table 1. The ABS statistics project the percentage of older Australians will increase from around 12% in 2004 to nearly 21% in 2031 and 25% in 2051. When this increase is coupled with an increase in total population from 19.3 million in 2004 to 23.7 million in 2031 and 24.9 million in 2051, it equates to a more than doubling of the aged population in Australia over the next 25 – 30 years.

Table 1: Australian Population Trends and the Over 65s

Year	1946	1961	1971	1997	2001	2011	2031	2051
Population aged over 65 years (%)	8	8.5	8.3	12.1	12.4	14	21.3	24.2
Total Population (Millions)	7.5	10.5	13.1	18.5	19.3	21	23.7	24.9
Population aged over 65 years (Millions)	0.6	0.89	1.09	2.24	2.39	2.94	5.05	6.03

Sources: ABS (2004) and ABS (2000)

This structural change will increase both the need for community transport and the numbers of people who require assistance when using public transport. Thus, structural ageing poses two problems to community transport planners. Firstly, designing a model of community transport with the capacity to grow and to deal with the increased demand over the medium to long term and secondly, designing a model of community transport which is cost-effective over the long-term and ensures maximum integration with public transport.

1.3 Policy context

Two significant reviews of public transport were conducted in NSW in 2003. The Unsworth Review of Buses and the Ministerial Inquiry into Sustainable Transport [the Parry Inquiry] and both included a focus on community transport. For example, Parry found that community transport is poorly funded and "does not provide adequate basic transport to those most in need" (Parry, 2003, pxiv).

This has given rise to a number of proposals including to streamline funding and administrative arrangements also to plan community transport services by involving local service providers to maximise "co-ordination of available resources" (NSW Government's Response to the Final Report of the Parry Inquiry, 2004, p3).

The two government reviews and submissions to those processes found:

1. "Community transport organisations aim to address transport needs at the local level to a broad range of people who experience transport disadvantage. Transport disadvantage is defined by a number of factors including mobility, isolation and age and directly compounds social exclusion"; (Campbell and White 2003)
2. The Department for Transport oversees three of the community transport funding programs: Community Transport Program, Home and Community Care (HACC) and the Area Assistance Scheme. The funding for these programs comes from different sources and carries different requirements; Community Transport Organisations also receive funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, Department of Veteran Affairs and NSW Health. Each of these has different funding agreements and carry out different reporting requirements; and
3. Community transport services generally have constrained resources and manage multiple and complex financial and performance reporting. As a result of the complex funding arrangements, they face unnecessary administration costs and inefficiencies in the delivery of services.

Additionally, more research on the issue of transport options and community transport may help establish a stronger link between community transport and public transport. This would include helping to identify the ways in which both individuals and communities are positively impacted by the existence of a range of integrated transport options.

1.4 Research contribution

In this climate of review and reform, it is vital that the nature of community transport services and the benefits these services provide are clearly documented and communicated. Good information regarding the benefits of community transport from a range of perspectives is essential for any effective review process.

Published literature identifies the need for more research to be conducted in the community transport sector. Dent (1999) notes the lack of research on the topic both in Australia and internationally. He draws attention to the fact that there is a need for more research on the outcomes of transport services and the extent to which these services are meeting transport needs (Dent 1999). In addition, he claims that there needs to be more research done on the explicit consequences of unmet transport needs within the community, as he believes that a notable segment of the population currently do not have adequate access to transport services (Dent 1999).

Based on the lack of literature available on the topic, the benefits of community transport, as a research topic, is not one that has been extensively researched. Of the literature on community transport issues that does exist, often the focus is on community transport in the rural context and is not as representative of community transport issues in an urban context. This research will contribute to a growing body of knowledge in the area of community transport, and, is particularly, relevant to community transport issues in Sydney.

The research in this report contributes our knowledge of community transport benefits to clients and the community with a focus on urban areas. This research combines community transport literature with the experiences of individuals representing the community transport sector within one part of the metropolitan Sydney area.

2 Methodology

This research project, conducted in three parts, was designed to explore community transport from different perspectives and look broadly at approaches to providing this kind of service. In this section we describe each of the methods used in the project, specifically interviews, literature review and a questionnaire.

2.1 Interviews

2.1.1 Clients

Two events were used to collect stories from the clients of a local community transport service. Firstly, CSCT convened a morning tea and workshop for sharing stories. CSCT clients were invited to the morning tea where researchers explained the research project and listened to and recorded the client's discussion of the bus service.

Secondly, researchers also travelled on the CSCT Friday morning shopping bus service. The bus driver introduced the researcher who explained the research. Stories were collected from clients on the bus.

Notably, the clients who attended the workshop and who were on the bus came from different locations: Clients from Millers Point and the Rocks were on the bus, and those from Surry Hills and Woolloomooloo attended the workshop. We have ensured stories from both collection processes are analysed.

Along with the authors, Sydney University undergraduate students were also researchers on the project. Their role was to listen and record the client's discussion of the bus service and the notes were collated as scrapbooks (See Figure 1). After collection through the two events, the stories were transcribed and returned to the clients for verification.

Figure 1: Story Scrapbooks
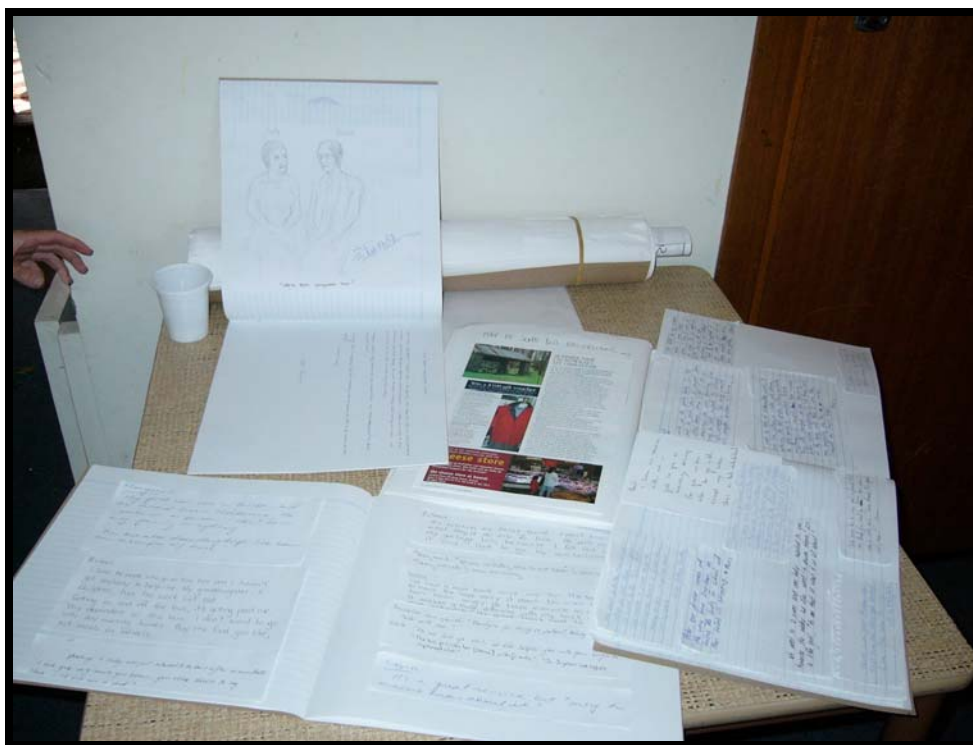
The stories are analysed, in terms of the range of benefits described by the clients, in Section 3. A total of ten stories have been included in this analysis and are reproduced in full in Appendix A – Stories from CSCT Clients.

Students collecting the stories were requested not to question clients but to let them tell their stories and to capture as much as they could. The emphasis was on the actual words used by the clients. Where specific questions or prompts were needed, these are indicated in italics in Appendix A. The stories have not been edited except by the clients.

2.1.2 Service Provider Perspectives

A number of approaches were used to include service provider perspectives in the research. Specifically we interviewed various community transport sector stakeholders, attended key stakeholder meetings and facilitated workshop discussions with stakeholder groups.

Interviews were conducted with stakeholders over approximately two months from May to June 2004. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was based on a series of questions relating to the benefits of community transport. They provide a more in-depth understanding of community transport issues from the perspective of community transport stakeholders and contribute empirical knowledge on a subject matter that is currently under-researched. Interviewees included a cross-section of government as well as non-government employees, namely, community transport practitioners within the Sydney metropolitan area, as well as representatives from the NSW Council of Social Service[1] (NCOSS) and the Community Transport Organisation[2] (CTO).

Stakeholders in the local community transport sector are a valuable resource to inform our understanding of community transport in Sydney. In some instances, those interviewed have been in a number of different roles within the sector, and were able to share their experience in these differing roles.

Participants were sent a record of interview to correct or modify any statements and/or provide additional information. The literature and interviews were analysed thematically

2.2 *Literature review*

A literature review was conducted using several different approaches to locate relevant community transport literature. The primary reference sources were a range of interdisciplinary database searches spanning academic and non-academic sources, Australian and non-Australian sources, direct web searches, including community transport websites from Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. and citation searches to locate other articles referenced by relevant authors. The community transport literature was located predominantly in the following areas of study: social services, transportation and health and medicine disciplines. Database searches for relevant community transport literature included OVID, Factiva, Informit and Ingenta (using primarily University of Sydney and UTS library online library sources).

A significant source of material is the Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS). Various QCOSS publications, including Shirley Watters' *Going Places – Community Solutions to Transport Problems in Queensland* and *Delivering Flexible Transport* highlight pertinent community transport issues.

Search terms used in this research included 'community transport', 'transport', 'transport disadvantaged', 'mobility', 'access', 'community services', 'elderly'.

Outside the scope of this research were articles that primarily focused on transportation in the context of rural community transport services, health related transport services, public transport and transport services exclusive to nursing/retirement homes.

The third component of the research explores different models of community transport operating in Australia and internationally. This research was conducted in the second half of

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[1] NCOSS is the NSW social service peak body

[2] The CTO provides peak body representation and services for community transport groups

2004 and involved further literature review and a questionnaire completed by some international community transport operators.

The literature review examined broad questions such as what components community transport models incorporate, how community transport fits into the wider transport framework and what drives the need for a community transport model. The literature review drew on academic databases and published articles, books and conference papers that explored community transport to locate relevant articles from conference proceedings, such as the International Conferences on Transport and Mobility for Elderly and Disabled People, and briefing papers from research institutes. A wider search utilising the Internet located reports and articles published by international community transport bodies such as the Beverly Foundation in the United States, the Community Transport Association in the United Kingdom and the European Union Ministers of Transport. The academic papers dealt more with the theoretical implications and needs for community transport. Reports on the models of community transport and the elements to be considered when designing a community transport model were more relevant for this study.

2.3 Questionnaire

A number of gaps were apparent in the literature. The main area warranting more detail was how specific community transport providers modelled their services. A questionnaire was formulated and sent to community transport providers. The questionnaire sought to gain more specific understanding of the most important elements of a community transport model and what model they utilise in their area. The questionnaire included four main areas:

1. Operator characteristics: including the community area served, whether the organisation is state-run, non-profit or private, the community groups that the services target, and strategies used to increase awareness of services.

2. Modes of services: including what vehicles are used, the purpose of their trips, and fee structures.

3. Volunteers: including the proportion of volunteer labour used relative to paid labour and methods used to organise potential volunteers.

4. Stakeholder relationships: including key service, community and funding relationships, customer satisfaction, and the broad community attitude to community transport.

The questionnaire was sent to over a hundred providers from the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Australia and Sweden. The responses from the survey were used as the basis for the case studies in the report (Section 5 and Appendix B – Case Studies).

3 Client Stories

This section describes and analyses the stories collected from clients who use community transport in central Sydney. The analysis focussed on the way clients described the community transport service. Three themes were identified in the stories: practical and tailored transport; independence; and social activity and relationships. The themes are each explored in detail below.

3.1 Practical and tailored transport

Clients consistently described the many practical benefits of the transport service provided by CSCT. A key function of the community bus is to take the clients shopping. The bus provides them with a convenient means of getting to the shops and back home, as well as providing access to a wider range of goods, particularly for those who do not have access to suitable shops in their neighbourhood. Eileen has lived in the area since 1936 and reminisces about the lack of services now available in the inner city area, saying there "used to be a butcher…[*a*] corner shop that sold groceries … [*and*] fruit shops".

Eileen likes the community bus because it means she can buy food she likes because she is not dependant on meals on wheels services. Similarly, Debbie appreciates the access to a wider range of goods, noting that before the community bus was available, she had to travel to Edgecliff which is some distance away because she couldn't get everything she needed in the city. Debbie's comments also suggest that by providing access to different shops and goods, the CSCT helps her to save money:

> *"Used to get a bus and a train to Edgecliff. Getting a taxi back really cut into* [my money] *… but it was still cheaper than shopping in the city... It's nice to be able to go out to the suburbs and get the same prices as everyone else" – Debbie*

Debbie describes the service as cheaper than a taxi which she would otherwise have to take home with her shopping. Other clients also contrast community transport with other types of transport. For example, Margaret described how a public bus service has recently been removed, with the implication that clients would have to walk up a steep hill if they used the remaining public transport. In comparison, the community bus is tailored to their particular needs. For example, Margaret and Mila refer to the flexible pick up and drop off service that is more convenient than a public transport service with fixed stops. Margaret said, "[*the bus*] comes all the way round and picks me up at A block" and Mila added:

> *"I've got arthritis,* [and] *cannot drive anymore. I walk slowly. I have diabetes. So it's very convenient that the bus brings us to the shopping mall" – Mila*

This issue of limited mobility mentioned by Mila is common to many of the clients. Health problems made it difficult to walk very far or carry shopping, as would be necessary if they used other forms of transport. The convenience of the community bus, and the extra assistance provided with the service[3] are important:

> *"For me it's really hard to go up and down with my shopping. So I inquired* [about the bus] *and they said they could accommodate me". – Mila*

> *"I've had a bad back since my son. It's lovely to have the boys carry it* [shopping] *down" – Debbie*

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[3] The shopping bus has both a driver and an assistant. Both are available to help carry groceries to the client's door.

> *"I don't know what we'd do without the bus. I wouldn't be able to get out anywhere"* – Connie (Pictured in Figure 2)

Figure 2: Connie

In addition, many clients mentioned the importance of having a known and trusted driver on the community bus, with whom they felt safe.

> *"Kevin is a good driver. We trust him. We don't get scared if he is the one driving"* – Mila

> *"No one's ever seen Kevin angry. He keeps everyone so cool".* – Debbie

> *"He's marvellous! … I don't know what we'd do if we lost Kevin. He seems to be the backbone. … He knows them all personally and they feel safe with him".* – Margaret

3.2 Independence

Many of the clients described the importance of the community transport service in maintaining independence, especially for some of them as older people. Some stressed that they had no other means of support or help including Margaret who described not having any family in Sydney as her "first son lives in Brisbane and the second in Melbourne". Eileen adds further detail saying:

> *"I know the people who go on this bus and I haven't got anybody to help me. My granddaughter,* [with] *2 children, has her work cut out"* – Eileen

Access to the bus service helps them to get where they need to go, and means they are supported to live independently. Earlier, Mila described her health problems and these are as a barrier to independence, which the community transport bus helps overcome. Eileen also said the bus meant she didn't have to rely on meals on wheels services. Debbie's comment highlights her difficulty with carrying heavy groceries and her reliance on the service.

> *"I'd be lost without it. I don't drive. I've got two animals and a son. A lot of canned food. No canned food for him."* – Debbie

> *"Getting on and off the bus, it's getting past me. Very dependent on this bus. I don't want to go into any nursing homes. Buy the food you like, not meals on wheels."* – Eileen

Eileen's comment in particular draws attention to the contribution of the community bus to keeping older people in their own homes, and reducing their need to access other services by comparing the bus to other services nursing home and meals on wheels.

3.3 Social activity and relationships

As well as practical shopping trips, the community transport service also provides access to a range of 'outings' and visits to places of interest (See Figure 3). It is a means for the clients to participate in a range of activities that would otherwise not be accessible. Whether these are new experiences, or opportunities to reminisce about past experiences, the ability just to get 'out and about' is mentioned by many of the clients, and is clearly much appreciated. Judy described "the theatre, the shopping, hydrotherapy" and Robert said "It's a full itinerary – we're going all the time!". Paul said "I take my camera with me – just to get a monthly outing", Zona pointed out they travel "North, South, East and West!" and Debbie knew the program well saying, "Once a month on a Tuesday, [we] have an outing. Mila's description is one example of the enjoyment the trips bring:

> *"Sometimes we go round the beaches – it's very nice. We go to the lookouts on top of the mountains. We go to Wollongong, the Hunter Valley"* – Mila

Robert, one of the clients himself, described some of the people he travels with on the bus saying:

> *"It's an outlet that they otherwise wouldn't have and they see things they'd never see if stuck at home. That's the idea of the bus – getting them out of their local environment. And they enjoy it"* – Robert

Zona's comment lends weight to value of trips other than shopping:

> *"It's more than a shopping trip, it's a memory trip – the places we used to go when we were young. I used to swim in this river as a young girl. It lets you go places where you have fond memories… I wake up bright and happy when the day comes for our outing"* – Zona

Figure 3: The CSCT Bus on one of the regular social outings

Zona said she'd be "lost without it" and her comment above is further evidence that the opportunity to go on 'outings' is linked positively to the clients' level of happiness and mental health. This is supported by the contrasting picture that clients paint of what they expect of their lives without the service:

> *"Without it, we are isolated – the community bus is our lifeline… our whole lives depend on community transport" – Judy*

> *"They would die, they would honestly die, they would waste away, that's my opinion. It gives them something to look forward to. A lot of them can't walk too far. Without the service they'd never get out. They'd never get out, they'd be sitting around in four walls in their flats." – Robert*

In addition, both Eileen and Mila talk about the need to "get out". Eileen noted that the bus helps people "get out of your mundane dreary flat". Mila stressed that, especially when clients don't have much money, they just need to "meet to have some coffee and get out of the house". Robert said that if the bus didn't exist he would be "sitting at home looking at the four walls", and feels that the bus is "breaking down the monotony and getting the elderly people out where they can't get out, too". Connie also says sometimes "I might go on the bus just to get out of the flat". Paul also added to this theme:

> *I could probably live without the bus but I think it's important for people to get out. Being enclosed can be a bit disastrous. Getting caught up in four walls. - Paul*

Kevin the driver feels that: "It's a social outing for them too… a social thing. They get a chit-chat". Indeed there was a very clear understanding among clients of the importance of this social aspect of their trips, and the relationships they form. Many of the comments suggest that clients are acutely aware of the importance of feeling part of a social network, to avoid

social isolation. The bus gives them the opportunity to make friends and maintain ongoing relationships:

> *"It's not just shopping, it's a social thing …. It's the only social life I have…*
> *Even if you don't have much shopping to do, you always know there's*
> *someone to go and have coffee with" – Judy*

> *"It's not just shopping. It's an outing. It's one of the few chances we get just*
> *to get out of the place; to go have coffee, see people you haven't seen in*
> *months" - Zona*

> *"I met my fiancée on the bus. She's Philippino. It's just interesting the*
> *different culture and everything. I wouldn't have met her otherwise". –*
> *Robert*

As well as providing clients with opportunities to socialise and increase their circle of friends and acquaintances, there is also evidence that the bus fosters a sense of community or 'belonging'. Debbie's comment, "I found when I moved back [the bus] is a really good way to meet people", shows the bus helps new people in the area feel included. This aspect is also common among people who already live in the same neighbourhood but may not otherwise have had contact, let alone become friends. Judy and Zona (Figure 4) made comments suggesting this community-building aspect:

> *"We walk past these people on our streets, but* [when] *we meet them in the*
> *community centre, it takes away the isolation, makes us a community.*
> *Otherwise we would have been excluded – remained in a bubble… We all*
> *live in the same block and we all met at the bus stop. We all lived close by,*
> *just a block away, but never met. Five or six of us met for the first time on the*
> *community bus, but we had been living together for years and now we have*
> *been friends since" – Judy*

> *"I met Val 17 years ago – struggling with shopping bags I was. She asked me*
> *what I was doing. Told me to catch the community bus… I sat with Val on the*
> *community bus that Friday. We have formed a strong bond through our*
> *trips…" – Zona*

Figure 4: Judy and Zona Sharing Their Stories
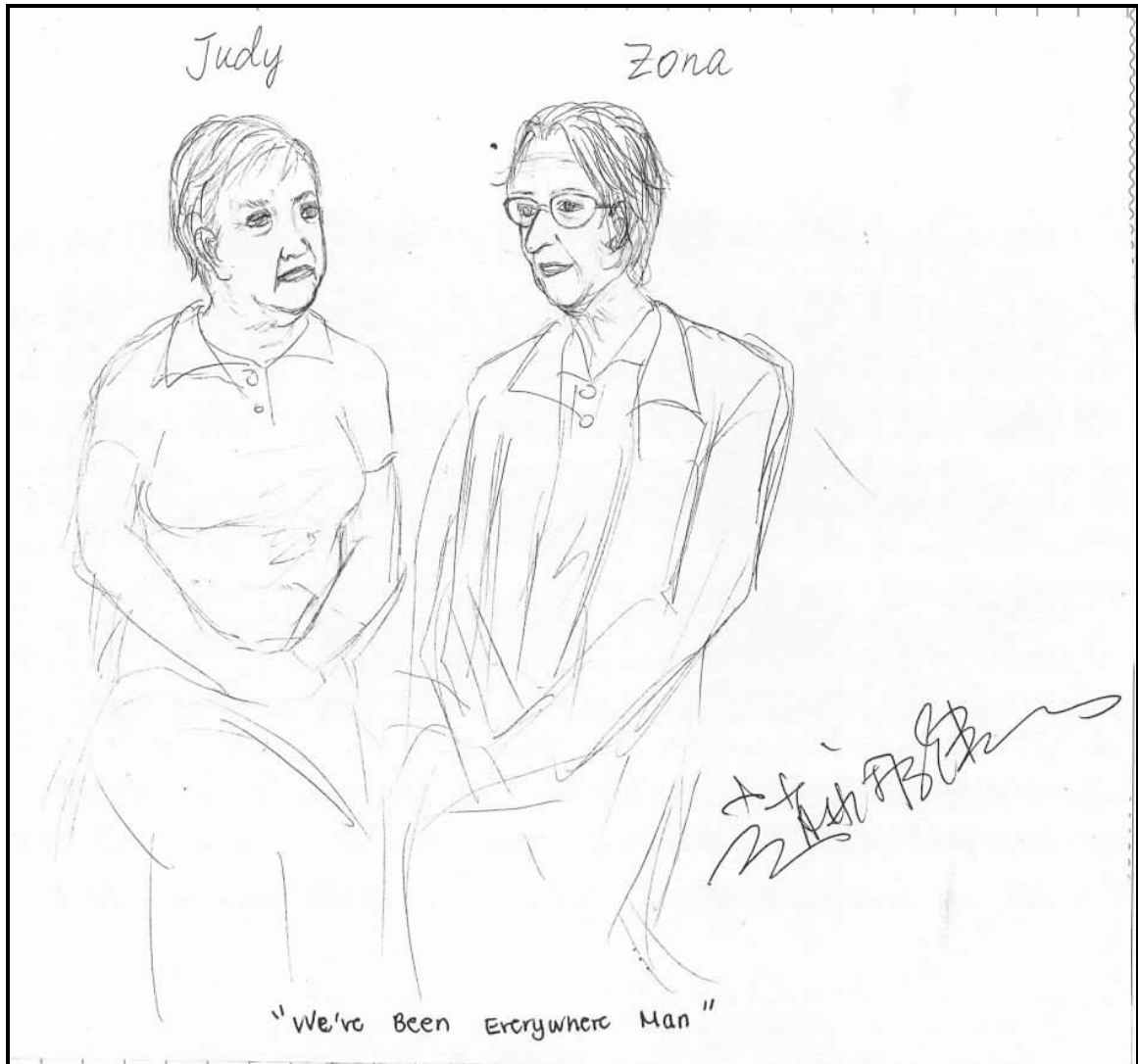
4 Community Transport Service Provider Perspectives

This section of the report presents the perspectives of service providers together with published research findings about community transport benefits. The main focus of this section is what stakeholders of the community transport sector think about the benefits of community transport. Interviewees included representatives from various community transport providers, as well as from NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) and the Community Transport Organisation (CTO). The input from these stakeholders is crucial as they are able to articulate the benefits of community transport based on their professional and personal experiences in the context of inner Sydney. This section includes a short summary of existing research on community transport benefits (Section 4.1) followed by service provider perspectives on:

- Definitions of community transport (Section 4.2)

- The value of community transport services (Section 4.3)

- Benefits of community transport to individual users (Section 4.4)

- Benefits of community transport to the community (Section 4.5)

- Difficulties and concerns regarding community transport (Section 4.6)

4.1 Existing Research on Benefits of Community Transport

The initial literature review provided an overview of concepts applicable to community transport in general as well as highlighting some of the issues relevant to community transport in urban contexts such as Sydney.

Published literature frequently describes the contribution community transport services make to the social welfare of the community. Emanoil (1999, p.20) notes that community transport services "contribute to quality of life and continued independence for a community's older population". The *Delivering Flexible Transport* publication from QCOSS (2003) emphasizes the importance of community transport in providing opportunities for passengers to socialize by presenting the stories of various community transport providers. The publication illustrates the ways in which community transport has helped to foster a sense of community amongst community transport clients (*Delivering Flexible Transport* 2003).

Community transport services have observable benefits to both the community and the individual. The literature highlights how clients of community transport benefit from the social interaction fostered by community transport services. Moreover, community transport provides alternative transport options that may be better suited to meet their specific transport needs. These transport options enhance the level of mobility of these individuals and allow them to engage more within the community. More importantly, these transport options help people to maintain their independence.

The literature helped to identify a number of themes that are pertinent to the current context of community transport in Sydney. However, the available literature on urban community transport in both a local and international context is relatively small. As previously mentioned, there is little documentation on the topic generally and even less on specific benefits of community transport.

4.2 Definitions of Community Transport

A range of definitions were provided by interviewees to explain what they understood 'community transport' to mean. The differing definitions of community transport reflect particular historical and political contexts. There is a tendency to base the definition in

relation to those who constitute community transport clients. A further understanding is that community transport exists to fill gaps in transport services.

4.2.1 Defined by service clients

There is a tendency amongst stakeholders to define 'community transport' in terms of its service users. This particular understanding of community transport mirrors the terms under which providers are expected to operate as outlined in the Home and Community Care (HACC) National Program Guidelines. The HACC Guidelines define those that are to be assisted by the Program as follows:

> (a) *the target population comprising persons living in the community who, in the absence of basic maintenance and support services provided or to be provided within the scope of the Program, are at risk of premature or inappropriate long term residential care, including:*
> i. *older and frail persons, with moderate, severe or profound disabilities:*
> ii. *younger persons with moderate, severe or profound disabilities; and*
> iii. *such other classes of persons as agreed upon by the Commonwealth Minister and the State*
>   *Minister; and*
> iv. *the carers of persons specified in sub-clause (a)*

> (*National Program Guidelines for the Home and Community Care Program* 2002)

Defining community transport according to the criteria outlined in the HACC Program definition above reflects the role that the HACC Program, as the primary funding body, plays in shaping services. This approach defines at the macro level who qualifies as clients of the services funded by HACC. This potentially limits the capacity of community transport providers to define the clients of their services and to tailor a definition to the specific needs of a given location.

4.2.2 Historical context

Other definitions placed community transport within a broader historical context.

One such example came from Dinesh Wadiwel of NCOSS. Focusing explicitly on community transport within NSW, he described it as "a specialized transport service that provides door-to-door transport for those with difficulties accessing other forms of transport." This definition, Wadiwel noted, is a shift from what was previously understood to be community transport in NSW, and is largely the result of HACC funding of community transport. He explained that the injection of HACC funding has shifted the focus of community transport services away from the broader community to specifically targeting those with disabilities and less mobile older people, i.e. those clients who satisfy the funding guidelines.

Wadiwel also noted that while HACC program funding has radically changed the industry, it has also benefited the community transport sector. The changes have helped to professionalise the industry as a provider that is qualified to support individuals with specialized needs.

Charlie Richardson from the Inner Sydney Region Council for Social Development also placed community transport within a historical framework. He explained community transport was loosely based on a definition of 'transport disadvantaged'. This is now a more narrowly defined understanding based on a service aimed at people who either have a disability or are frail and aged, along with their carers.

Transport disadvantaged generally refers to those who have frequent mobility or access problems because either "they cannot use conventional public transport regardless of its

provision and efficiency", or "they could potentially use conventional public transport but are unable to do so due to its absence" (Watters 1996). This earlier understanding of community transport allowed service providers more flexibility in determining the eligibility of those who were able to use the service. Previously the definition may have also included, for example, mothers with children or those in urban areas with poor public transport services.

Richardson has noted that the change in funding sources for community transport from the 'Community Transport Program' (CTP), which operated under the concept of 'transport disadvantaged', to the HACC Program has resulted in a shift in the definition of who is considered eligible to use the service. This shift in definition relates not only to who is now able to use the service, as outlined above, but also relates to how community transport is understood in a broader context.

4.2.3 Services provided

Another conceptualization of community transport sees it as a substitute means of transport for those that cannot use public transport. In the words of Sharon Blunt:

> *"There is a push to have community transport acknowledged for what it does alongside public transport, as we see [it] as a right for everyone to have access to public transport services. CT has never been recognized for its contribution to public transport and the fact that we provide over 3 million trips across NSW.- We should have that recognition." - Sharon Blunt, RWCTG*

Similarly, Dinesh Wadiwel of NCOSS explains, "Community transport helps to fill the gaps in transport landscape". This explanation of community transport expresses an understanding of community transport as a service that picks up where other transport services leave off.

4.3 The Value of Community Transport Services

Community transport is a unique service, different from public transport by specific attributes. These are what makes it valuable to the clientele it serves. These attributes relate to the ways in which the service is client-oriented, the ability of the service to meet the specialized needs of its clientele and the way in which it offers a personable face that is not generally found in other forms of transport. It is important to note here that community transport providers offer a variety of services. They vary significantly, depending upon the clientele and capacity of the provider. Therefore, the features outlined below will not necessarily apply to all community transport service providers.

4.3.1 Client-oriented service

Perhaps one of the most defining features of community transport is the strong emphasis on a client-oriented service. Charlie Richardson argues that community transport is not about economics, but people. He illustrated this point with a vignette from his earlier days as a community transport bus driver. Richardson explained how one client was prone to repeatedly making loud negative remarks along the lines of "Oh, I'd rather be dead, wouldn't you?" as another wheel-chair bound woman was being loaded into the bus on the wheelchair hoist. To resolve this issue and to spare the others from this woman's remarks, the bus route was changed so that the wheelchair-bound woman was picked up first.

This proved to be an effective solution from the driver's point of view although not necessarily efficient in 'economic terms'. The decision to change the route to prevent the insensitive commentary was based on client-driven interests and not economic ones. This example is given to exemplify the client-centred approach taken by community transport providers.

Phil Drew from the CTO underscores the importance of community transport as a specialized service for high need clients. He noted that mainstream transport services do not provide the

personalized assistance offered by community transport. Nor does it provide a door-to-door service. Drew points out that the service provides assistance to clients for the following: lifting groceries or parcels, carriage of medical equipment, and assisting clients on and off the buses.

Heidi Hughes from RWCTG also highlighted client assistance and the provision of a comfortable and affordable service. She cited the punctuality of community transport as another client-oriented feature of the service.

These examples demonstrate the value of community transport as a service that effectively addresses the specific needs of its clientele.

4.3.2 Client involvement

Another characteristic particular to community transport is the opportunity for client engagement in actual service operations offered by some providers. As Sharon Blunt from RWCTG explains:

> *"Community transport clients are very involved with our service. We send out quarterly newsletters and clients contribute their stories, or poems or any other interesting articles. We also involve clients on the management committees and they become very involved. Not only do they use the service but they feel they also can contribute to the service...Clients contribute to their service (we could not do it without their contributions). This allows them to feel some ownership." - Sharon Blunt, RWCTG*

This feature of the service highlights the real sense of community and belonging that community transport providers seek to foster. The involvement of community transport clients in the service helps to provide a sense of self-worth in that they not only use the service but are able to have a say in how the service is run.

Additionally, community transport creates a sense of community in which clients are involved in the lives of one another. Donna Wood from Central Sydney Community Transport relayed the following example in illustrating that 'community transport isn't a little thing.'

There was one instance, where those on the community transport bus noticed that a woman who used the service was not on the bus on this particular day and had her blinds down in her home. Having noticed that her blinds were drawn, the group on the bus shared a deep concern for this client's well being. Apparently it was unusual for this woman to have her blinds down at that particular time of day. The sense of community that had been established on the bus, showed in the concern the other clients had for the welfare of this woman.

This incident exemplifies the level of personal involvement experienced by community transport clients, which is also in many instances, actively fostered within the group. As Donna explains, the 'nebulous, unmeasurable factor is the most powerful' and it is precisely these kinds of attributes that help make community transport a 'different' kind of service.

4.4 Benefits to Clients

There are a multitude of benefits for individuals who utilise the services. The ability to continue to live independently as well as having access to transportation and the community, are strongly featured in the community transport literature. Dent argues that having access to transportation for mobility outside the home is "very important in enabling older people living in the community to maintain their independence" (1999, p.186). Similarly, Sterns, Burkhardt and Eberhard (2003) emphasize the importance of having a variety of transportation forms available that meet the physical and emotional needs of older adults. Many older people value and prefer transport options that allow them to commute independently without relying on family and friends for transportation. "The importance of

mobility through transportation options is central to the concept of independence" (Sterns, Burkhardt and Eberhard 2003, p.10).

The following sections outline these benefits in more detail as observed by the service providers.

4.4.1 Independence and confidence

Maintaining independence is often cited as one of the most significant benefits of community transport to the individual clients. Community transport providers and clients alike link this notion of independence with quality of life.

As Sharon Blunt of RWCTG observed:

> *"Feeling you have your independence again gives you confidence.*
> *Community transport provides this to our clients. Many clients have been*
> *isolated at home for many months and the only thing they want to do is to get*
> *back on the bus which represents the independence that keeps us all striving*
> *to participate in society."*

Charlie Richardson of Regional Council stated that community transport is about giving people back their sense of autonomy. He explained how communities are largely structured on the assumption that most people have their own vehicles for personal transport. For those who do not have that option or who have limited mobility, the system does not meet the needs of individuals.

Dinesh Wadiwel of NCOSS notes that access to transport provides a level of mobility, which allows individuals to live independently and remain in their own homes rather than having to move into other forms of accommodation.

4.4.2 Involvement in the community

A key point that resonated amongst all of those interviewed was the way community transport services help to break down social isolation.

Figures from the RWCTG, illustrate the importance of community involvement for the elderly, a demographic group vulnerable to social isolation. Sharon Blunt describes the demographics of her clientele:

• The majority of the clients are between 75-97 years of age.

• Approximately 80% are female, mostly widowed

• 85% of the clients live alone in their homes

In this context, where many clients have lost their partners and live alone, (and particularly for those with limited mobility in the over 75 years range), community transport is likely to play a significant role in connecting these clients to the larger community. As Sharon Blunt noted:

> *"Being isolated at home does not improve anyone's quality of life. The aged*
> *people with disabilities need to be involved and participate in their*
> *community. For our clients the benefits of community transport provide the*
> *opportunity to be involved with life. All our clients are residing in their own*
> *homes and most are living alone. They need companionship, stimulation and*
> *the feeling of belonging." - Sharon Blunt, RWCTG*

Charlie Richardson of the Regional Council explains that community transport helps to introduce a 'great deal of socialization' to an otherwise isolated community. The value of community transport in breaking down social isolation was also explained as such:

> *"Isolation is a social phenomena - it reflects the barriers that prevent people*
> *from participating in communities. Sometimes this can relate to geographic*

factors (" How far away does a person live?") or technological factors
("Does this person have a phone?")...CT [community transport] tries to deal
with the main factor, which is mobility and transport. Often this can be about
providing the means for community participation for people who are
stranded in their homes, despite living within relatively dense urban areas. If
you are an older person who, for example, is recovering from a hip
replacement, or a stroke, then a CT service can provide the only avenue for
you to get out of the house, take advantage of the services and meet other
people in some sort of social context." - Dinesh Wadiwel, NCOSS

As a former community transport bus driver, Richardson has observed the formation of social bonds and friendships amongst the clients he served. He related the story of two friends, who had lived within a few blocks of each other and how they managed to reconnect (on the community transport bus), after 20-some years of not having had contact. Such an example is given to illustrate the degree of isolation and immobility experienced by many in the community.

Heidi Hughes of RWCTG describes a hypothetical life without community transport, claiming it would be socially 'sad' as 'community transport is seen to be a part of the community'. Her comment is made to show the importance of community transport in contributing to the larger community.

4.4.2 Personal Contact for Clients

Community transport is unique in that it emphasises personal contact with clients. The personal contact is one other reason it is described as a service that offers much more than transportation.

Heidi Hughes of RWCTG provided a vivid example of the positive changes one client underwent after the death of her husband. Immediately following the death of her husband, this woman, who had been client of the Randwick/Waverley Community Transport Group, began to distance herself from others. The community transport operators recognized the impacts that the death made to her physical as well as mental health. She started again on the community transport shopping trip, and that the change in her emotional well-being was improved. The woman began to cry less and reconnected with friends as a result of re-establishing interaction with others through the community transport service.

It is well understood by the service providers and in the literature that personal contact is important for people's well being, particularly those who are vulnerable. Social contact (through either community transport connections or friendships) is seen to help individuals keep life in perspective.

Charlie Richardson of Regional Council made the following comments:

"Many clients have been with community transport for over 8 years, some for 13
years. In that time, clients have made close relationships with drivers and office staff
and, in some cases, the drivers are the only person they see all week. When they are
in the car or bus they talk to the drivers and bus assistants because they feel
confident and safe. Many times in the office, our calls are long and involved because
some clients just need someone to talk to who they feel comfortable in confiding their
problems. All people need transport, but in community transport, the level of service
and care for the clients is unique." - Charlie Richardson, Regional Council

Community transport offers more than a transport service but also provides a point of personal contact that many who are isolated would not receive using other transport options. Service providers, including Owen Mackay, describe the staff as a kind of family for some of the clients.

4.4.3 Connecting clients to other services

Another important benefit of community transport is the way in which services operate as a point of contact to a range of other services. As transport is an important aspect of staying mobile and engaging in the community, individuals often contact community transport providers for this service and are also able to tap into other community services. Heidi Hughes points out that "Through our services clients are often able to connect to other services." The examples she gives are Meals-on-Wheels and the Waverley Seniors Centre

The ability of individuals to access services they may have previously been unaware of is very valuable, particularly, as community transport is likely to be the first experience using this type of community service. Linking into other services helps maintain quality of life. As Sharon Blunt from RWCTG, explains:

> *"When that call is made, we can assess whether they may need other services*
> *to assist them at home. All brochures and literature that is provided to them*
> *when that first call is made informs them about all the services that come*
> *under the Home and Community Care Program. All our clients visit doctors*
> *and often that first call will come from a concerned doctor or receptionist*
> *who feels 'Mrs. Jones' is having greater difficulty getting to the medical*
> *appointments." - Sharon Blunt, RWCTG*

Community transport often serves as an important link into services that target older people in particular. Charlie Richardson of the Regional Council observes:

> *"Once clients have accessed community transport, which is often the first*
> *thing that they might need as they begin to age, they are plugged into the*
> *system." - Charlie Richardson, Regional Council*

Community transport may link clients to the network of support services and help them maintain their quality of life as they become older and need further forms of assistance.

4.5 Benefits to the Community

Community transport benefits the community as well as the individual clients.

4.5.1 Social capital

An important benefit of community transport highlighted by stakeholders was the role in generating social capital and building community.

> *"We sometimes transport clients who are advocates for their peers to*
> *community forums. They speak at these community events, where*
> *representatives from the various tiers of government and community services*
> *are present, to advise them of the needs of the aged community. Without*
> *community transport, some of these clients would no longer be able to attend*
> *these events to make their needs heard." - Heidi Hughes, RWCTG*

This example demonstrates the importance of providing individuals access to community events enabling them to continue to make meaningful contributions to society. An inability to access the greater community affects not only the individuals who remain in isolation but the vibrancy of the community as well. Charlie Richardson of Regional Council explains that community transport has a different goal from other transport services and actively fosters community building. Community transport to an otherwise isolated community fosters a sense of community through just "the ordinary little chat".

4.5.2 A healthy aging population

Stakeholders pointed out the important role some community transport services play in bringing patients to their appointments. Phil Drew from the CTO notes that community transport provides an essential service for individuals who have no alternative transportation to doctor's appointments and medical treatment such as dialysis. Without this service, many clients would be unable to attend their appointments, which would likely result in a deterioration of their health and well being.

Another significant benefit to the community includes servicing a healthy, independent aging population. Phil Drew of the CTO states that without community transport, many individuals would not have access to community services or to medical services. This, he claims, would likely increase the burden on Government to increase funding for institutions in the aged care sector such as nursing homes.

Dinesh Wadiwel of NCOSS underscores this point that community transport provides a level of independence that prevents a need to move into nursing homes. Individuals are less likely to be socially isolated, and are also in a better position to continue living in their own homes as a result of being able to more readily access resources in the community such as the shops, markets, and doctors.

4.5.3 Potential to alleviate strain on families

Some stakeholders indicated that community transport may also have the benefit of alleviating the burden on the families and friends of those who are transport disadvantaged. Phil Drew of the CTO surmised that providing people access to transport alleviates some of the burden placed on the families of these individuals, otherwise expected to meet those transport needs.

Similarly, Charlie Richardson of the Regional Council notes that community transport is likely to decrease the level of dependence of an older person on their family. This, he reasoned, may have the potential for improving family relations. Owen Mackay, a long-term practitioner in the field described community transport as a form or respite for both the clients and in some cases their carers.

4.6 Difficulties and Concerns

The difficulties facing community transport providers are numerous. The strain to provide services on very limited resources is perhaps one of the more significant problems facing providers. Heidi Hughes of RWCTG states:

> *"We often get calls from clients living in hostel care or the relatives of clients*
> *living in nursing homes requesting transport assistance. However, our*
> *current funding guidelines preclude us from assisting clients in hostels or*
> *nursing homes. Also, we don't have the resources to assist them. Again, we*
> *have been lobbying government departments to provide funding assistance so*
> *we can help these clients."- Heidi Hughes, RWCTG*

These comments suggest of the constraints under which community transport providers operate are both in terms of HACC Program community transport guidelines outlined in the and in terms of resources.

A concern expressed by community transport providers is that they are often expected to provide significant amounts of health-related transport. Sharon Blunt elaborates:

> *"We work closely with Health, only because we do all their work for them*
> *and we do it with so very little money from Health. Most of all transport is*
> *now to health services and all other services providers…require a transport*
> *component in their service provision. Unfortunately, transport is the last*

thought when setting up new services and is overlooked. So, they come to
community transport services to assist them…This problem of poor planning
for new services is impacting greatly on community transport services." -
Heidi Hughes, RWCTG

Variations of this problem appeared amongst other community transport providers. Dinesh Wadiwel of NCOSS observes "Community transport will inevitably pick up the transport tab where services have failed to take into consideration the transport issues of their consumers." He describes health providers who make referrals without accounting for transportation as "irresponsible." Health-related needs dominate 70-80% of trips made by community transport providers. According to Wadiwel, community transport is, thus, limited in its capacity to service others who may also be transport disadvantaged.

Community transport providers face a number of resource constraints. Limited resources hinders opportunities to help others in the community who continue to have unmet transport needs. Whilst providing transport services to important facilities, health-related transport can consume significant resources and prevent other community transport services being provided. Without secure funding to maintain and/or to expand the provision of these services, sustaining community transport will continue to be challenging for the sector.

5 Ways to Provide Community Transport

The third research question sought to provide insight into models used elsewhere in Australia and internationally. Successful service delivery characteristics, structural differences and other approaches were researched through contact with service providers. Specific case studies are documented in Appendix B – Case Studies and have been drawn on to illustrate particular aspects in this section.

5.1 Adapting Community Transport Models to Suit Client Profile

Transportation dependency refers to people, who due to age or disability, are dependent upon others to get where they need to go. The alternatives include family members, friends or neighbours who are both willing and able to drive them where they need to go, public transport, taxis or community transport programs. However, for many of the transport dependent, dispersed family groups, mobility impairments and the cost of taxis make community transport the only viable option.

Transportation dependency offers a number of challenges to both community transport providers and the transport dependent themselves. Community transport providers have to determine how to reach the transport dependent in order to inform them about their services, how to ensure there are services available and what range of services are needed or wanted. Transport dependent people need access to both essential and quality of life services and need to know how to access information about available services.

While transportation dependency is already a problem in western societies, Australia will soon have to deal with increased levels of stress being placed on transport networks similar to those of Scandinavia and Japan as a result of the aging population.

5.2 The General Model of Community Transport

All models of community transport have some common features that distinguish them from other models of public transport. The vehicles, drivers and administrative structure that form the foundation of a community transport service, as well as the links with the community (providing services and receiving funding/volunteers) and the government (funding/regulatory framework) combine to form the general model of community transport.

The Beverly Foundation is a research institute that has been conducting research into community transport programs (or supplemental transport programs) in the United States since 1999. The results from their latest survey in 2003 will be used to illustrate a general model.

At the simplest level a community transport provider consists of a driver or drivers, a vehicle or vehicles and an administrative structure (illustrated in Figure 5). Clients and funding represent two of the key links between the provider and the community and government respectively. This section will look at these characteristics in more detail.

Figure 5: The General Community Transport Model.
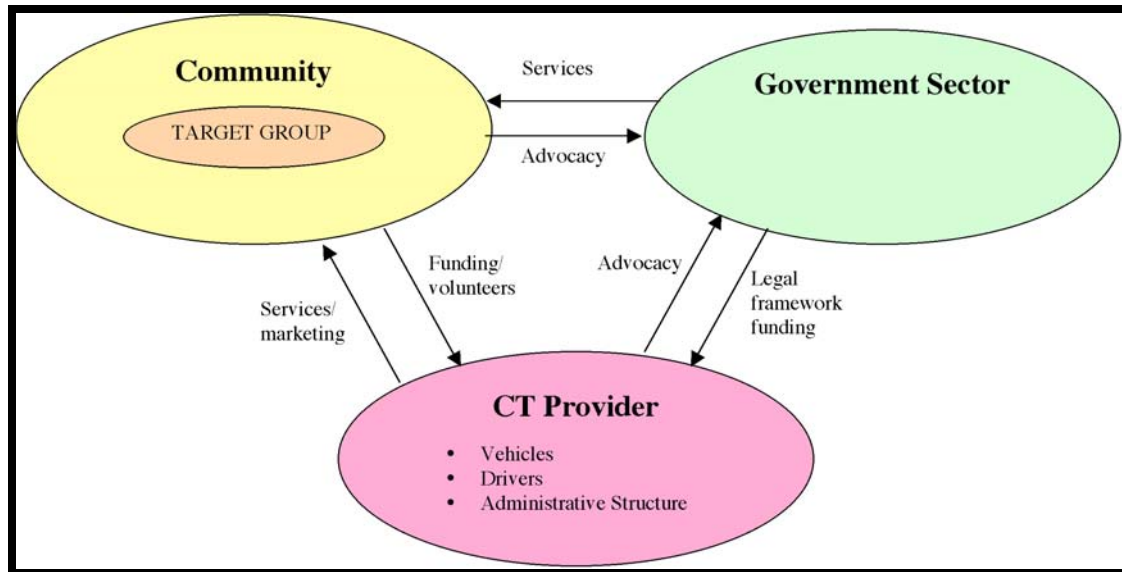
5.2.1 The Community Transport Provider

Vehicles

There are three main types of vehicles used in community transport provision. Mini-buses or vans, which typically accommodate between six and twenty people, sometimes specifically tailored for improved accessibility. This can include low floors, wheelchair ramps and wheelchair seating. Cars, either taxis, volunteer cars or specialised vehicles equipped for the mobility impaired, are common, especially in smaller projects and health-related services. Finally, larger buses, accommodating 21 or more people are used by the larger organizations for longer distance trips or larger community groups.

Half of all American community transport programs use vans (mini-buses), with 42% cars and 29% buses, as seen in Figure 6. The choice of vehicle is affected by other components of the model. Programs with a significant number of volunteer drivers are more likely to use cars (69% of the time) than vans (17%) or buses (4%).

Figure 6: Types of Vehicles Used.
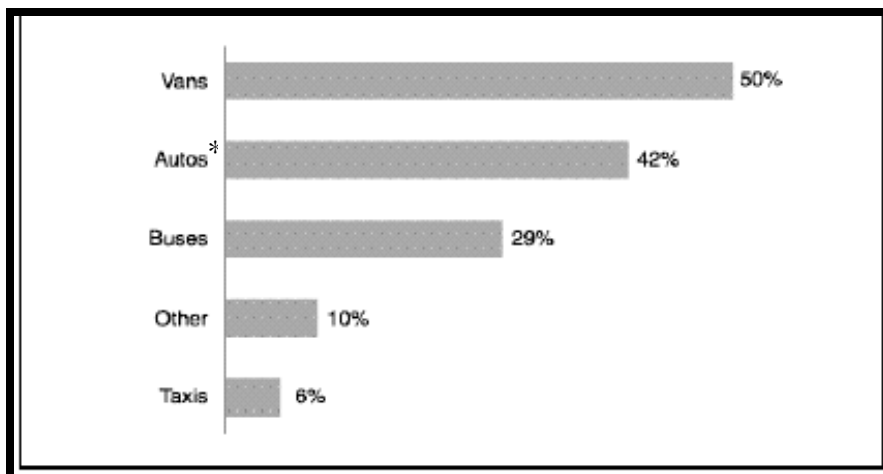
* Autos = cars   Source: Beverly Foundation, 2004b

Special Vehicles

Both Case Study 1 and 6 (Appendix B) illustrate the importance of special vehicles for community transport services. Large-scale community transport providers such as the FlexRoutes project in Gothenburg, Sweden and Sheffield Community Transport in England enjoy some economies of scale over groups of smaller community transport providers. The FlexRoutes service uses low-floor minibuses, which are highly accessible to disabled and elderly users, each with a capacity of between 10 and 13 seats with a wheelchair for kerb-side roll-on. In Sheffield low-floor minibuses adapted for increased accessibility with wheelchair lifts and the capacity to accommodate motorised scooters on board are used.

Larger groups benefit from being able to purchase more vehicles and having a stronger relationship with suppliers whilst smaller community transport providers may have difficulty affording expensive technologies some of these providers utilise. Resource sharing is one possible future direction for groups of smaller community transport providers. By pooling some resources into avenues such as a vehicle pool, a common software package for bookings and routings or a joint information line for all community transport services in a city, some of the costs of resource duplication can be minimised. The CTO is in a unique position to assist in this endeavour since some service providers in Sydney face difficulties in obtaining useful vehicle models from manufacturers. The service providers see their combined purchasing power (e.g. within the CTO) or even in conjunction with STA as a major opportunity in terms of accessing appropriate vehicles cost effectively.

Drivers

Drivers are frequently singled out in customer satisfaction surveys and focus groups as one of the key factors in a successful community transport program. Whether a community transport program uses volunteer drivers or paid drivers (or a mixture of the two) influences the level of administrative support required to organise and coordinate the services, the cost of running the program, the services that are offered and the vehicles used by the program. The Beverly Foundation in the United States conducted a wide ranging survey of over 400 community transport operators throughout the United States. Figure 7 shows their findings regarding the mixture of drivers used in the United States.

Figure 7: Types of Drivers
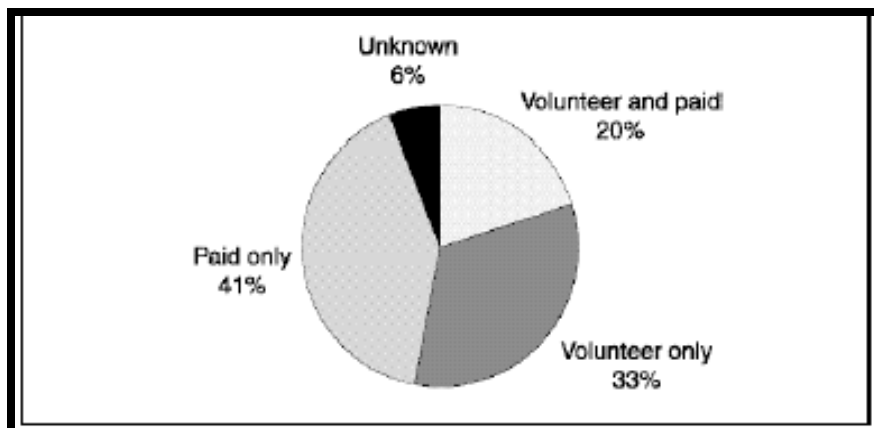
Source: Beverly Foundation, 2004b

Correlations between the types of drivers and other characteristics include:

- Programs with high levels of volunteer participation can require higher levels of administrative support than programs employing solely paid drivers. This can be due to the higher levels of turnover and training required when using volunteers and paid drivers also have administrative responsibilities in some cases.

- Programs that rely solely or heavily on volunteers are much more likely to use cars than larger vehicles, with the opposite true of paid drivers.

Drivers and the Role of Volunteers

The role of volunteers in contributing to community transport has changed over time and continues to vary. Case Study 2 in Australia illustrates a phasing out of volunteers whilst in contrast Case Study 5, rurally located in Ireland, shows volunteers are widely relied upon. Case Study 1 provides evidence of the key role the drivers (volunteer or otherwise) have in maintaining client satisfaction with the service.

In Sydney, service providers saw the possibility for some of their clients to increasingly use public transport. They identified the opportunity for drivers and other staff involved in public transport to contribute to client satisfaction in the same way their drivers did.

Administrative Structure

The level of administrative support required to run a community transport program is largely determined by the size of the organisation. Community transport programs can range from very small providers with a single driver/administrator with one vehicle to very large city-wide providers with multi-million dollar budgets and a fleet of vehicles such as the FlexRoutes program in Gothenburg, Sweden.

5.2.2 Community (Clients)

The group or groups who are clients within a potential community transport model will influence the scope of the project, the funding streams available and the capacity to finance some of the operating costs through fares. The vast majority of community transport services focus on two groups: the elderly and the disabled. The chart below shows the client comparisons for community transport providers in the United States.

Figure 8: Clients for Community Transport Organisations
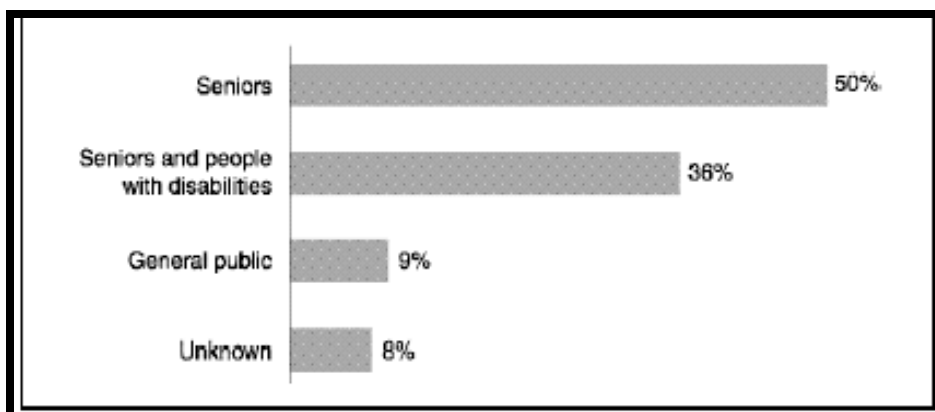
Source: Beverly Foundation, 2004b

The groups that community transport organizations focus on influence on the size of the model required to run the services. The narrower the client base, the more likely the model will rely heavily on a few large government funding bodies. A wider client base tends to

result in a broader funding stream, often including some form of user charges and/or hiring out of vehicles.

Clients and Links to the Community

The case studies illustrate the variety of ways community transport providers focus their service and connect with the local communities. Case Study 6 in Sheffield illustrates the potential for community transport operating in a location with efficient, convenient public transport. In Sheffield, where a dial-a-bus service is already in operation, the community transport providers have sought to address broad social inclusion issues by focussing on transport from areas of high unemployment to areas with a job surplus and providing services for young people.

Case Study 5 illustrates a different kind of link to the community where in Armagh in Northern Ireland the community transport provider has sought to connect their services to community organisations by involving representatives from the organisations on the management committee.

Findings from overseas examples and local experiences show that informing clients about services available in an area often proves difficult to community transport providers with limited budgets. In the local context, Case Study 2 shows how the co-location of community transport in a neighbourhood centre offering a range of services helps to maximise the client's awareness of the transport service. Larger multi-service providers can also benefit from referrals from medical professionals can go on to offer clients a number of services once they become aware of the organization's existence.

5.2.3 Funding

Funding is typically a key link between the provider and the government. Community transport organisations are however funded from a very diverse range of sources. These include:

- Departments of Health,
- Departments of Social Services
- Departments of Aged Care
- Departments of Disability Care
- Departments of Transport
- Public transport providers
- Local councils
- Regional grant schemes (especially in the European Union)
- Community groups
- Hospitals
- Healthcare providers
- Religious groups

In a community only a few of these funding streams are likely to be available and these will influence the style of the services provided and target groups the services are provided for.

Funding Sources and Long-term Commitments

Operation Lift in Brandtford, Canada is the subject of Case Study 4 and demonstrates the potential for local government funding of community transport services. This approach is also in use in Sydney.

Long-term funding security is exemplified in the Swedish example in Case Study 1. There a new service has taken three years to reach sufficient client numbers to be economically viable but the growth in clients has continued over the period since commencing the service.

Funding diversity is a common theme in the community transport sector. Whilst a diverse funding stream may offer stability over the long term, the variety of funding bodies often require specific reporting or administrative arrangements. Simpler funding streams may offer simpler administrative systems and more independence for designing services, or administrative arrangements may be able to be negotiated for consistency.

Providers also have concerns that services cannot be provided to some groups due to the funding requirements, for example people in hostels or nursing homes who fall outside the HACC guidelines.

5.3 Models of Community Transport

In a review of community transport in Australia, Parolin (1991:6) argued that "planners of specialised transport services are faced with two approaches (i) the mainstream approach (fully accessible public transport services), or (ii) parallel transit services." In many Western countries these approaches are in fact being pursued simultaneously with expanding community transport and increasingly accessible mainstream public transport coexisting.

Even when fully accessible public transport is available, there will still be a need for community transport services designed specifically for the disabled and mobility impaired. While the variety of these services is diverse, the European Council of Ministers for Transport categorises them into three broad categories: (i) Demand Responsive: Individual transport; (ii) Demand Responsive: Shared Transport; and (iii) Shared Community Transport Services. Each of these will be examined individually below.

5.3.1 Demand-Responsive: Individual Transport

This is the group of services that provide transport for an individual (plus a carer/escort/companion in some cases) door-to-door or door-through-door. They fall into two sub categories, voluntary car schemes and accessible taxi schemes, with similar operational characteristics but different operating costs.

Volunteer car schemes, in which the passenger is carried in the volunteer's own car, are quite common in the United States and Europe, especially in towns, rural areas and suburban environments. The costs are kept low due to the minimal capital expenditure and volunteer labour, and the fact they are often used exclusively for essential services such as out-patient treatment at hospitals.

Accessible Taxi Services can be used by nearly any mobility impaired passenger, with the main problem being the costs associated with these schemes. Subsidised taxi schemes are quite common in Scandinavia, the United Kingdom and Australia, either parallel to a group community transport scheme or as the sole form of community transport available. The largest scheme of this sort is the London Taxicard Scheme, where a fleet of accessible, purpose built cabs, driven by taxi drivers with disability awareness training, are available to eligible clients at a subsidised rate.

The costs associated with these forms of transport mean that is important to focus the service on those most in need. Thus, accessible taxi schemes are most effective when used parallel to more cost-effective group community transport programs, so they can be targeted at the most seriously mobility impaired clients, for whom mini-bus travel is not an option.

Vehicles: Cars or Taxis

Drivers: Volunteers, carers, health workers, disability trained taxi drivers.

Administrative Infrastructure: Quite small, volunteer car schemes are often administered through senior care centres or community centres and taxi schemes are sub-contracted to taxi companies, which administer them through their existing network.

Client Group: While they can range, are most cost-effective when limited to a narrow group of severely mobility impaired.

Funding: Taxi schemes are usually subsidised by the government, whilst volunteer car schemes can be funded through government grants or community centres.

Shared and Individual Community Transport

Case Study 1 in Sweden provides data showing that shared community transport services there have significantly decreased the cost of specialised taxi services over time. It appears more mobile clients have elected to use the shared service despite being eligible for the individualised service.

5.3.2 Demand Responsive: Shared Transport Model

This model, sometimes called dial-a-ride or dial-a-bus, provides door-to-door service using minibuses or large cars along flexible routes. The service is run similar to a taxi service with clients booking in advance (ranging from 15 minutes to 24 hours or more), with the route determined by the bookings received.

Vehicles: Predominantly minibuses, with some cars.

Drivers: Paid drivers, usually with some training in disability awareness, as they are required to assist passengers on to and off the bus.

Administrative Infrastructure: Information and Communications Technology is being introduced in a number of European countries, especially Scandinavia and the United Kingdom, to organise routes and take bookings. Otherwise, a dispatcher handles the bookings and route organisation.

Client Groups: Varies, but usually falls into the middle ground between those requiring individualised service and mainstream services.

Demand Responsive Shared Transport is illustrated in Case Study 1 and 3.

5.3.3 Shared Transport Services

This is the most common model of small-scale community transport, used throughout the United Kingdom and Australia. The model usually uses mini-buses or vans, often equipped for accessibility, that provides service along relatively fixed routes from residential areas to a facility such as a hospital, day care facility or shopping centre.

Vehicles: Buses or Minibuses/Vans catering for multiple passengers.

Drivers: Usually paid, although some trained volunteers in services centered on community/senior care facilities.

Administrative Infrastructure: Some services have incorporated Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into dispatching and reservations, otherwise handled by administrative staff.

Client Groups: Any. More likely to be available to a broader range of people than demand-responsive services.

Funding: Shared transport services are usually funded, wholly or significantly, by government agencies for transport, aged care or health. There are also some commercial community transport companies that fall into this category.

Shared Transport is illustrated in Case Study 6.

5.4 Community Transport in the Context of Public Transport

There is a broad agreement amongst transport professionals that there is generally a trade-off between flexibility and cost in public transport. The higher the degree of flexibility a transport model has, the higher the average cost (per passenger/km). This has led to the cost-flexibility continuum, which shows where some of the different forms of public transport stand in relation to each other (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Cost/Flexibility Continuum
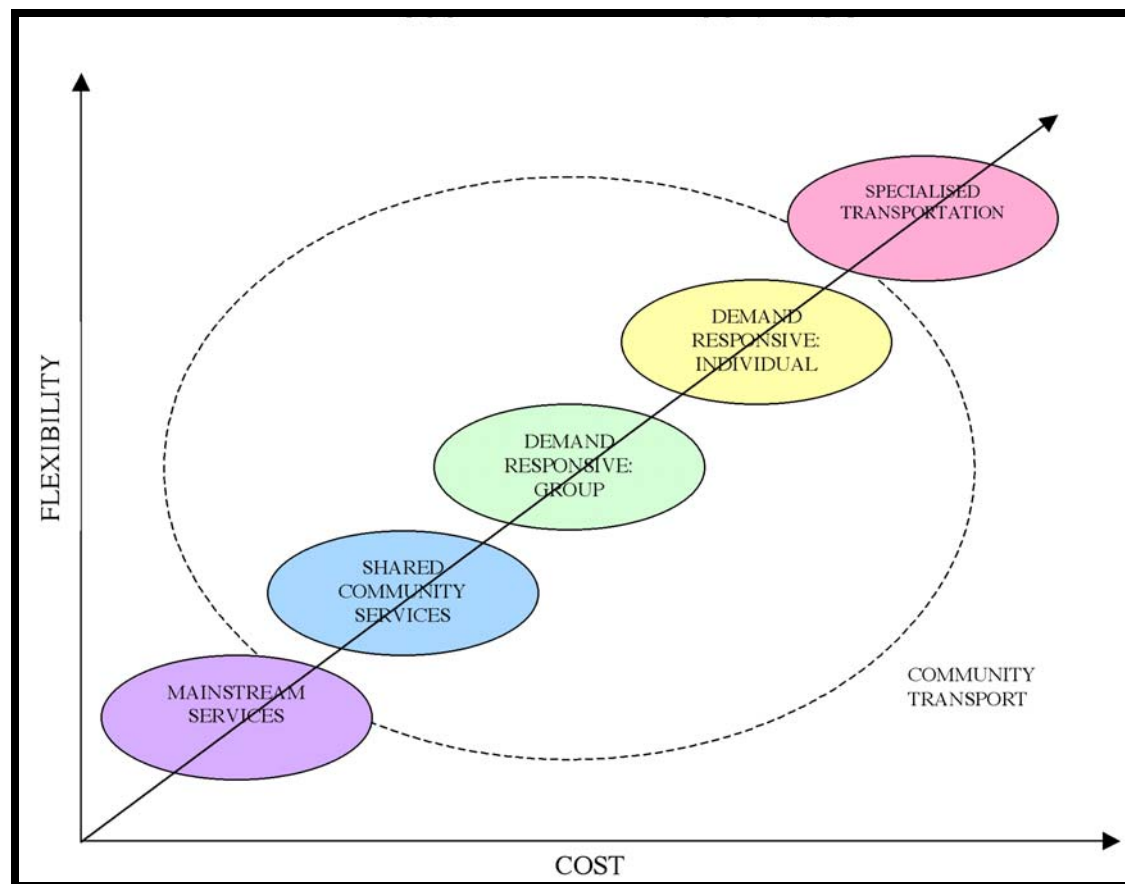
Source: Adapted from CTA, 2003

Figure 9 shows that community transport fills the gap between the cheaper, less flexible mainstream public transport services and the more costly special transport services, such as subsidised taxi schemes. In any given community, one or more of these services may be available. In communities with community transport or mainstream public transport as the only options, some people may be transport disadvantaged, either because they find public transport difficult to use or because they don't qualify for community transport. The need to

supply good public transport options to all people in the community led to the Swedish transport model.

The Swedish Transport Model: Sweden has traditionally had an excellent social service system, with a range of policies specifically designed to improve the quality of life of the elderly and disabled. The 1990's saw Sweden develop a new transport policy, premised on the assumption that "no community can be fully served with a single transportation mode" (Stahl, 2000:2). So while Sweden was adapting their full size fleet of buses with improved accessibility measures such as low floors, there was a belief that this was not the only measure required to improve transport for the elderly and disabled. Swedish transport policy advisors concluded that "the difficulties encountered by people with a reduced mobility vary so much that different solutions are necessary" (Stahl, 2000:2). This led to the formation of the "Community-responsive public transportation" policy for urban areas, which paid special attention to the needs of elderly and disabled clients.

Figure 10: The Swedish Transport Model
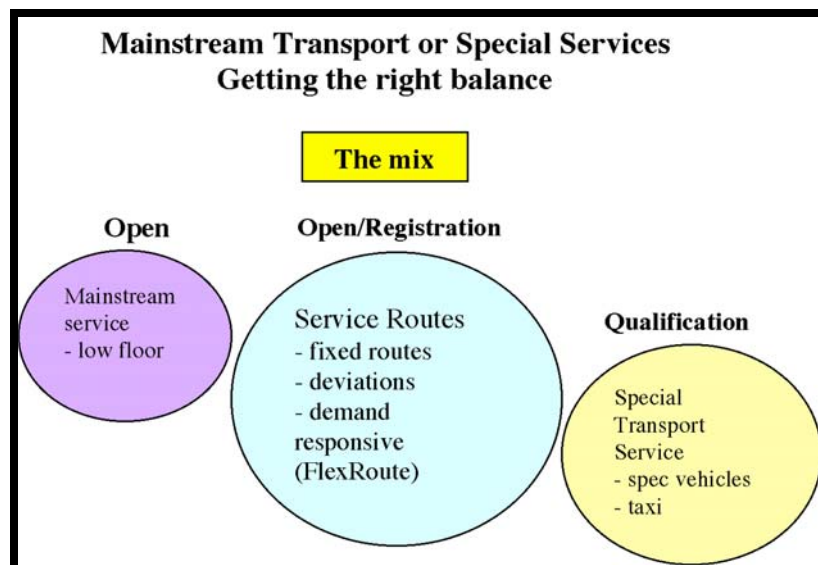
Source: (Stahl, 2000)

The Swedish model involves a three-tiered approach to transport, illustrated in Figure 10. The first element is accessible mainstream services, utilising low floor buses. The third tier is Special Transportation Services (STS), which are aimed at the seriously mobility impaired, who require a very high degree of personalized, door-to-door service. These services are largely provided through subsidised taxi schemes. The high cost of providing these motivated the second element of the model: Service Routes. FlexRoutes is a service aimed at bridging the gap between STS services and mainstream public transport.

6 Project Conclusions

This conclusion draws together the different research components of this report including literature reviewed and the perspectives of clients and service providers. The research has identified themes explaining what is meant by community transport for clients and service providers, documented the benefits and in addition outlined some examples of community transport models from overseas and locally. The findings highlight not only the benefits of community transport, but also express the difficulties and concerns relating to service provision and identify some key issues for the sector in the future. Discussion regarding the overall project conclusion with the Sydney Eastern Metropolitan Group of community transport providers has informed these conclusions.

6.1 Definitions of community transport

Both the literature and providers conceptualised community transport in comparison with conventional transport, principally that it was necessary to fill the gaps left by other services. Community transport is a door-to-door service, which also provides client assistance, for example, to carry shopping, or help clients get on and off the bus. The distinctness of community transport services is in part a reflection of available funding, and associated conditions. Historic shifts in funding have changed the client focus from the broader community, to a more specific clientele.

6.2 Benefits of Community Transport

The literature review, stories from bus clients and community transport providers all highlighted the practical, tailored support that community transport offers. Community transport services focus on meeting the needs of transport disadvantaged older people, those with limited mobility, and individuals with severe or mild disabilities by providing cheap and more convenient access to goods and services such as shopping and medical services.

Community transport contributes to clients' independence, especially for those without an alternative transport option. Effectively, community transport also promotes independent living and reduces reliance on institutional care. Moreover, community transport fosters a healthier aged population and may thereby reduce the need for aged care.

The clients interviewed for this research indicated that they benefited from the social aspect of community transport that maintained and generated friendships. Being on the bus itself was a catalyst for social interaction for people who, even as neighbours, would not usually come into contact with each other.

The specialised nature of the community transport service means that providers and the industry as a whole can be responsive to needs, for example by making route adjustments and providing appropriate levels of assistance to clients. Drivers were identified as key contributors to community transport services. Drivers are typically known to clients and, usually together with bus assistants, are able to provide a high level of support to clients.

6.3 Community Transport Models and Implications

International and local models of community transport provided insight into community transport at a range of levels including: community transport generally, individual community transport services, and broadly the whole transport system.

A general model of community transport was outlined, based mainly on US research, explaining the fundamental aspects of a community transport provider and the links with the community (specifically the clients) and the government (where the link is often related to funding). The community transport provider consists typically of the vehicles, drivers and the administrative structure. The vehicles tended to be vans or small buses, drivers were mainly paid but a major role is still played by volunteers and administration varied.

Within community transport the three key different kinds of service offered are grouped as:

> (iv)   Demand Responsive: Individual Transport (transport for an individual door-to-door or door-through-door, e.g. volunteer car drivers or special taxi services);
>
> (v)   Demand Responsive: Shared Transport (advance booking bus service along flexible routes, e.g. dial-a-ride or dial-a-bus,); and
>
> (vi)   Shared Community Transport Services (usually mini-buses or vans, often equipped for accessibility, that provide services along relatively fixed routes from residential areas to a facility; most common model of small-scale community transport, used throughout the United Kingdom and Australia).

At the level of the whole transport system, the Swedish approach demonstrates that integration is essential between special transport services, community transport and public transport. That model indicates that clear delineation in terms of clients makes for ease of integration and helps reduce duplication. In the local context, service providers saw the focus on integration between community transport and mainstream public transport as an important outcome of the involvement of the Ministry of Transport. They see useful steps being taken to increase cohesion between services and look forward to continuing involvement in enhancements. Examples of service providers improving cohesion between services is their role in brokering service provision from other transport services, for example bulk hiring of taxis for individual transport needs and hiring of their buses for private use by specific groups.

Other key findings from the case studies are as follows:

- Drivers are key to client satisfaction and volunteers are generally being reduced due to training and insurance costs;

- Special vehicles are important but economies of scale are difficult to attain – some service providers saw potential for CTO involvement in bulk-purchasing but most argued that the purchasing power is not sufficient within community transport and broader alliances were needed;

- Individual transport costs can be reduced through effective shared community transport;

- Alliances of many kinds are needed:

  o Long-term commitments are needed to ensure projects are cost effective – three-year funding agreements (with twelve monthly reviews) assists to provide longer-term security however the cycle can still be particularly difficult for small-scale services indicating that alliances may be important for smaller providers;

  o Public transport and community transport work effectively integrated.

  o Providing community transport in parallel with other social services or with formal links to community organsiations can expand client access to services – some operators who benefit from this kind of alliance saw multi-service provision as particularly useful whilst others indicated concerns about transport becoming a poor cousin to other crucial services;

  o Local government funds can provide effective local services – positive sentiment related to some existing services working effectively in partnership with local government however this was balanced by concern over the potential for community transport being a lower order priority at this level;

  o Service providers are genuinely interested in innovation which can improve quality of life for their clients – information technology is a key component in some of the larger services operating internationally and local providers

expressed interest in innovation of this kind. They saw potential to reduce administrative burden by streamlining reporting requirements and indicated this aspect was well suited to collaborative efforts across the industry.

6.4 Future research

There is a clear need for alternative transport services for particular populations in the community (Hine and Mitchell, 2001). The literature available on community transport in Australia, however, was found to be relatively small. This point is highlighted by Dent (1999) with particular reference to a need for more research in areas such as the outcomes of services and consequences of unmet transport needs. This report outlines the benefits of community transport and serves as a basis for future discussion.

The interviews provide new information on a topic for which relatively little information exists. Moreover, this report provides insight on the issues in the context of Sydney. The emphasis on provider perspectives is valuable in outlining experience and understanding 'in the field'. Providers, for instance, detailed benefits not evident in the literature, including the ways that services provide personal contact for clients and link to other community services. These perspectives provide evidence of the positive impacts of community transport on individual clients as well as the community. The literature and the interview data both emphasise the importance of community transport as a significant factor in allowing transport disadvantaged individuals to maintain their independence and highlight the social value of the service.

There are many areas where the approach taken in this report could be extended. A comparison of individuals living in an area and without community transport before and after the implementation of community transport services may provide additional insights into the benefits of the service, and could be the focus of future research. Comparisons of different geographical and demographic communities would also be valuable.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Stories from CSCT Clients

JUDY

Without it, we are isolated – the community bus is our lifeline … our whole lives depend on community transport.

We go to the theatre, the shopping, hydrotherapy. We walk past these people on our streets, but we meet them in the community centre – it takes away the isolation, makes us a community; otherwise we would have been excluded … remained in a bubble.

Five or six of us met for the first time on the community bus, but we had been living together for years and now we have been friends since

How would you describe the bus in one word?

Life-line. Whether for shopping, for getting out, or romance. It's a lifeline.

We all live in the same block and we all met at the bus stop.

It's not just shopping, it's a social thing

It's the only social life I have.

Even if you don't have much shopping to do you always know there's someone to go and have coffee with.

We all lived close by, just a block away, but never met.

Ours is much more socialising. Millers Point: ours is a very isolated community. We go to the cinema once a month.

ZONA

I met Val 17 years ago … struggling with shopping bags I was; she asked me what I was doing, told me to catch the community bus … I sat with Val on the community bus that Friday. We have formed a strong bond through our trips … the bus is a part of our life, we are very very lucky …

Ermington, Watson's Bay, Marrickville, the Central Coast; our theme should be – 'I've Been Everywhere Man' …

It's more than a shopping trip; it's a memory trip – the places we used to go when we were young

My name actually means ANZAC

We go on an outing once a month, we go North, South, East and West.

I used to swim in this river as a young girl. It lets you go places where you have fond memories!

Before I went on the bus, a lady said why don't you come on the little community bus, 'thankyou for telling me', I said. It turned out she went to school with my cousin.

We are happy to go where the bus is going. I'd be lost without it.

I wake up bright and happy when the day comes for our outing.

It's not just shopping. It's an outing.

It's one of the few chances we get just to get out of the place; to go have coffee, see people you haven't seen in months.

Go on an outing once a month, we go North, South, East and West!

We came to a river and a friend told me that she used to swim here when I was a little girl. She's about 80 years old now.

Zona: 'See you on Monday.'

Margaret: 'See you then'

Zona: 'Until next week!'

MARGARET

My first son lives in Brisbane and the second lives in Melbourne. He works in a prison. I don't have any family in Sydney.

The bus also does day trips. I've been on a couple of those.

We like to do historic tours. We just went to Camden… you have to go where your interests are. A lot of people like art galleries and arts and crafts. We went to the lavender farm out the other side of Bowral and that was really interesting.

Mapped out Liverpool … to visit sweet factories before Christmas

Once you get in these sweet factories, you never get out

We went out to a Monastery out near Mittagong. They had all these little Monasteries and it was really lovely. We went to Brigadoon

On their trip to Robertson Margaret recalls that,

The funniest part about seeing the biggest potato at Robertson was that it was all rusty looking. We went out to a Monastery out near Mittagong. They had all these little Monasteries and it was really lovely.

Regarding Kevin the bus driver,

Kevin fits it all in. He's marvellous! When Kevin went overseas we had a relief bus driver and everything went hay-wire … I don't know what we'd do if we lost Kevin. He seems to be the backbone.

He's very popular with them, he knows them all personally, and they feel safe with him.

Yes, we would like to go out more. We can only go out on Mondays because that is our set day. That means we miss all the festivals on weekends.

Margaret mentioned that the bus can't travel father than 100 kms.

If they do that we'll lose a lot tenants on the bus. We're funded by DADAC – you know the aged care. They'd really like to go to Jervis Bay, but its too far, more than 100kms.

Comes all the way around and picks me up at A Block.

We have one big problem and that's getting the 301 bus back so it drops people off at Devonshire St so they don't have to walk up the hill. A lot of people are asthmatics and can't make it up the hill. So many people want to go on the bus but we just cant fit them all in. We're still waiting on our new bus so we can go over the mountains. We're not getting the new bus until July.

ROBERT

It's breaking down the monotony and getting the elderly people out where they can't get out too

A lot of them can't walk too far

Without that service they'd never get out

They'd never get out, they'd be sitting around in four walls in their flats

That's the idea of the bus – getting them out of their local environment

And they enjoy it

It's an outlet that they otherwise wouldn't have and they see things they'd never see if stuck at home

They would die, they would honestly die, they would waste away, that's my opinion

It gives them something to look forward to

If it didn't exist I'd be sitting at home looking at the four walls

It's a full itinerary we're going all the time!

[*The bus stops*] Every Thursday at Eastlakes

I met my fiancée on the bus. She's Philippino. It's just interesting the different culture and everything. I wouldn't have met her otherwise.

We go to Eastlakes every Thursday.

DEBBIE

It's nice to be able to go out to the suburbs and get the same prices as everyone else.

Used to get a bus and a train to Edgecliff. Getting a taxi back really cut into my [*money*]… but it was still cheaper than shopping in the city.

I used to go to Edgecliff. You couldn't get everything in the city. They didn't have Coles Express then.

Once a month on a Tuesday, have an outing, the Club on the Central Coast, factory outlets. I'd love to go back on them but I'm doing a course now. You know everyone.

I'd be lost without it

I don't drive

I've got two animals and a son

A lot of canned food

No canned food for him

I found when I moved back… a really good way to meet people

I've had a bad back since my son. It's lovely to have the boys carry it down.

No one's ever seen Kevin angry. He keeps everyone so cool. It makes a huge difference with my back problems and arthritis. It's great. Thank God its there.

MILA

How she first came to know about and use the community transport bus:

One time I was sitting down there on the front at the bench. And I asked where's that bus going? And he said it's for the shopping. And that's how I found out. For me it's really hard to go up and down with my shopping. So I inquired and they said they could accommodate me.

I've got arthritis, cannot drive anymore, I walk slowly. I have diabetes. So it's very convenient that the bus brings us to the shopping mall.

Most clients, they don't have much money. Just meet to have some coffee and get out of the house.

We don't go to the movies. We'd rather go out than sit around. We went to the Tulips Festival. We made a joke to go to Canberra. Kevin is given how many miles in going and coming back.

Sometimes we go round the beaches – its very nice. We go to the lookouts on top of the mountains. We go to Wollongong, the Hunter Valley. We went to the gallery of the official photographers of the stills of the Passion of Christ. I even bought the book and he put the autograph in it.

Kevin is a good driver. We trust him. We don't get scared if he is the one driving.

My sister lives in Kirrawee with her six kids. My husband passed away four years ago.

KEVIN

Driving the Bus

The thing this job needs most is a good memory. Mrs Jones will say 'Pick me up at 11 at the post office'.

There's no dispatcher, so with 50 other passengers with similar requests it really tests your memory.

The logistics are a balancing act because our individual service has to dovetail with our route service.

While all this is going on the lights have changed!

So that's the hardest part.

The best part is their appreciation of the service.

They repeatedly say 'What would we do without it?'

It's a social outing for them too. That other group, they're chattering all the way. The other group's more reserved.

It's a social thing.

They get a chit-chat.

It's a great service but only the in club know about it.

EILEEN

Been living there since 1936. Used to be a butcher. There's no butcher in the city. Corner shop that sold groceries … fruit shops. Land's so valuable. Built some nice homes there. Get out of your mundane dreary flat. I've rung up three times. I think they only listen to developers.

I know the people who go on this bus and I haven't got anybody to help me. My granddaughter, 2 children, has her work cut out.

Getting on and off the bus, it's getting past me. Very dependent on this bus. I don't want to go into any nursing homes. Buy the food you like, not meals on wheels.

His relatives are house bound. I don't know what they'd do only for him. He puts out my garbage bin, because I fell out with it once. Had to go by ambulance.

CONNIE

The Unsung Hero (Kevin the bus driver)
He is a wonderful man … an unsung hero. He always calls me Constance; my parents always used to call me that when I was naughty … I haven't told him yet – not going to either … he'll beef it …

A lot of things have happened here, a murder in A block the other day, his head was in the sink, the other one – his body was never found … it's been really gruesome you know; a lot of people killed, pretty sad – not that anyone would stop me … but Kevin, in such a time, such a wonderful man.

Last time we went out on a Monday and all the gates were closed. We went to this Buddhist temple – all this men in orange robes. One woman said, 'I'm not going – it's against my religion,' and I said, 'I'm going in, and it's against my religion' … I try not to be critical you know, but the gates were closed.

I don't know what we'd do without the bus. I wouldn't be able to get out anywhere … I love to go in that bus and sit there while my son goes shopping … I don't know what I'd do honestly – nothing … nothing

We were the third family to move in here. I might go on the bus just to get out of the flat.

PAUL

I could probably live without the bus but I think it's important for people to get out, having that diversion

Being enclosed can be a bit disastrous

Getting caught up in four walls

I take my camera with me – just to get a monthly outing

I've got no one else to go with except my sister

She's a bit inhibited

Appendix B – Case Studies

Case Study 1: "FlexRoutes": The Swedish Model in Gothenburg

<u>Urban Profile</u>: Gothenburg is Sweden's second largest city, with a population of around 500,000 people, a population density of 1060 people/square km and a geographic area of 450 square kilometres. The FlexRoutes project was originally trialed in Högsbo, an urban district with a population of around 16,000 people living predominantly in high-rise buildings. About a third of the population of Högsbo are over 65 years of age. Due to the success of the original project, the model has been expanded to cover half of the city of Gothenburg, with current plans to increase the coverage to the other half of the city in the next few years.

<u>Objectives of the project</u>:

To bridge the gap in existing services between eligible Special Transport Service (STS) users who do not require the degree of personalised service offered by the STS program, and those with mobility impairments who did not fall under the STS criteria and were confined to the use of mainstream public transport.

To find new ways for disabled, elderly people and others with barriers to travel, to participate in their communities activities.

To significantly reduce public expenditure on the STS taxi scheme for disabled and elderly persons.

To test the capacity of Advanced Transport Telematics (Information and Communication technology designed specifically for transport) tools to increase the efficiency and reduce the cost of demand responsive transport.

<u>The Service</u>: Four buses service each route, which consists of two endpoints either side of the service area. In the Högsbo case the endpoints are Frolunda Torg, Gothenburg's largest shopping centre, and Sahlgrenska Hospital, a large regional University Hospital. Between the two end points are 60 'meeting points', which are no further than 150 metres from a clients home (disabled clients are offered door-to-door service).

Figure 11: Map - The FlexRoutes Service Area
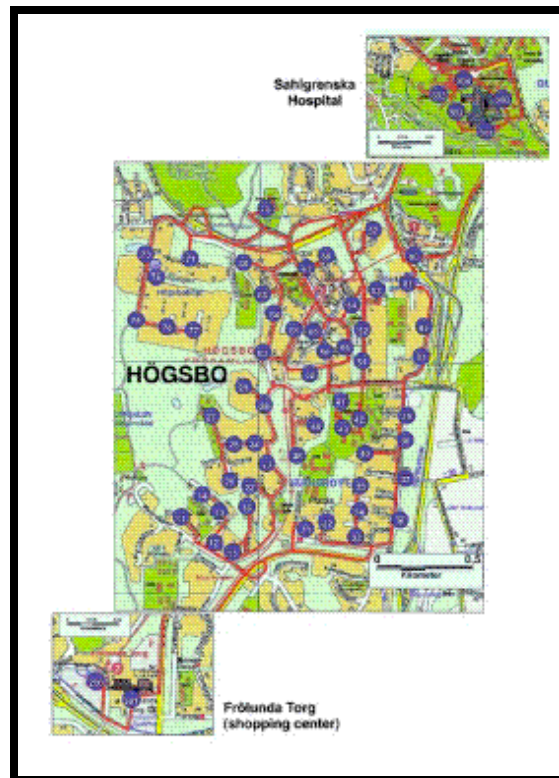
<div align="right">Source: TTS, 1999</div>

Buses leave each terminal every half hour, with the route between meeting points determined by the reservations. The drivers carry laptops which can be used to take return bookings from the terminals and feed these into the routing system. The maximum trip time between the two terminals is 50-55 minutes.

Reservations can be made between two weeks in advance and 15 minutes prior to the bus leaving the terminal. An automated call-back service gives clients a 15 minute warning before the bus is due to arrive. Cancellations can also be made up to 15 minutes prior to the bus departing the terminal.

The FlexRoutes Model:

Vehicles: The model uses low-floor minibuses which are highly accessible to disabled and elderly users, each with a capacity of between 10 and 13 seats with a wheelchair for kerb side roll-on. The project originally started with 4 vehicles, but has increased this number to 21, with the intention to further increase the fleet to 35 as the model is expanded to service the whole of Gothenburg.

Drivers: The paid drivers are trained in disability awareness, with a mandate to provide personalised, friendly service. The drivers were regarded as the most important element of the model in customer satisfaction surveys (with a rating of 9.9/10) as they contributed to "the 'social-club atmosphere' of this mode of travel" (TTS,1999:3).

Target Group: The service is open to all members of the public, but has been designed specifically for the elderly and STS eligible disabled. Due to the nature of the service, over 90% of the passengers are elderly or STS eligible.

Administrative Infrastructure: The project is jointly administered by the STS Authority and the Traffic and Transport Authority. Bookings are handled through two parallel streams.

Clients may either call an automated booking line (toll-free) that directly inputs the request into the routing system (currently at 25% of requests but rising) or call an operator who manually inputs the request.

Funding: 20% from user fares, with the remainder coming from STS funding (50% from the savings from reduced taxi usage) and the Government funded Traffic and Transport Authority.

The capacity of Community Transport to reduce the cost burden of special transport services.

Figure 12: Graph - Market Share for FlexRoute in Högsbo
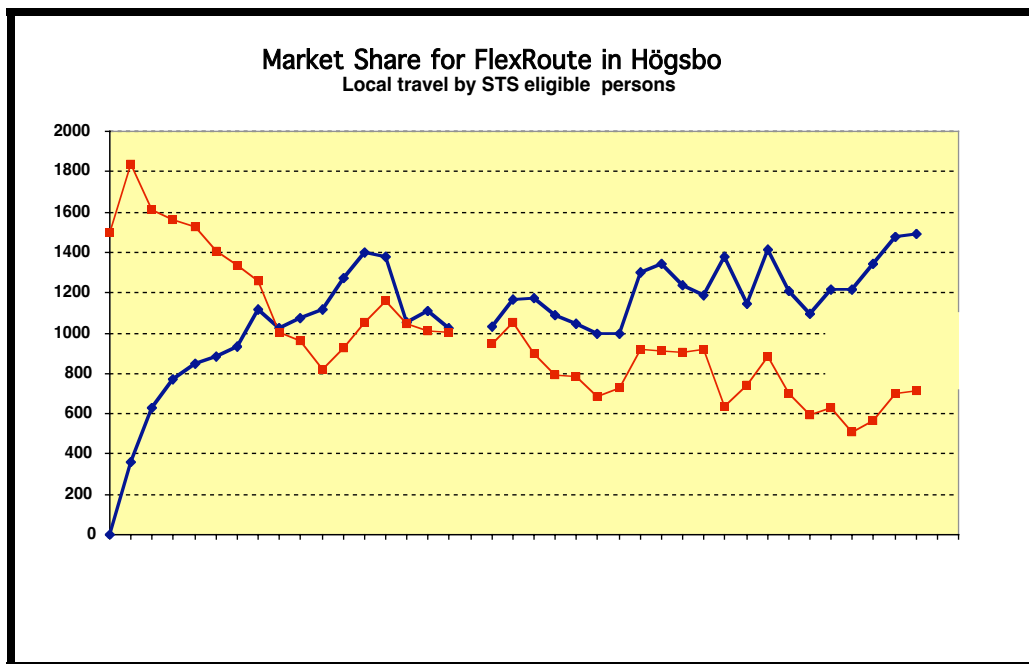
<div align="right">Source: Cape, 2000:7</div>

The project has significantly reduced the load on the STS taxi scheme, with over 60% of STS eligible users choosing the FlexRoute service over the taxi scheme. The graph above shows the degree to which the implementation of the FlexRoutes system has reduced the use of the STS taxi scheme. Over the 3 year period of the trial, STS use dropped by 50%. This shows that an effective community transport sector can reduce some of the financial cost off the provision of the more expensive specialised individual transportation schemes.

The Benefit of Long-Term Commitment of Resources

Figure 13: Graph- Ridership development for FlexRoute in Högsbo from 1996 – 1999.
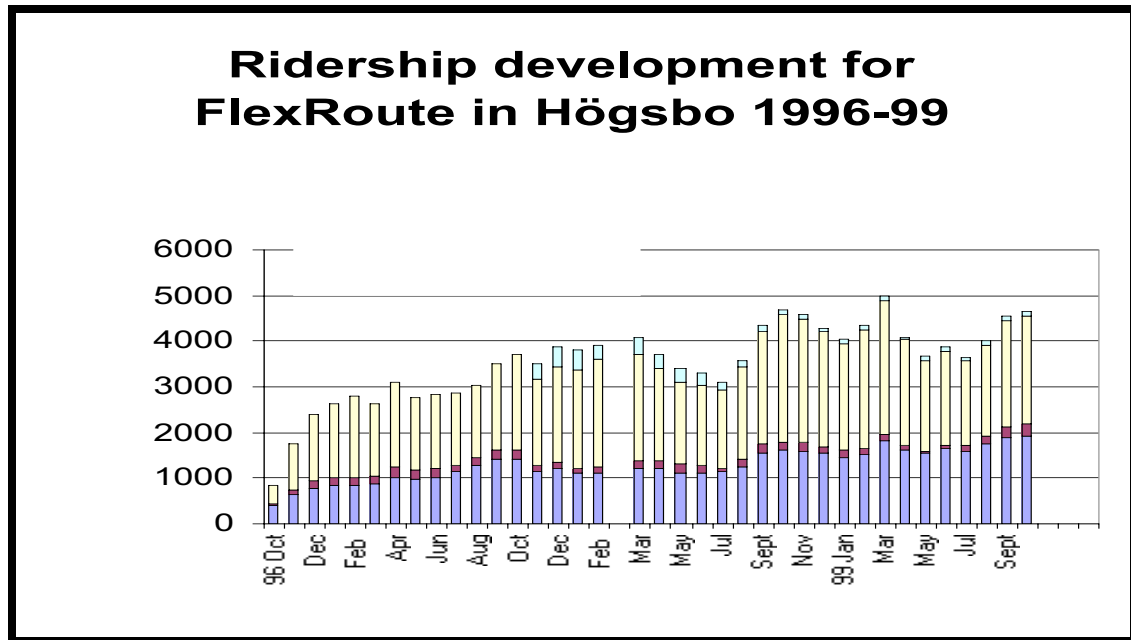
<div align="right">Source: Cape, 2000:7</div>

As the graph shows above, the number of passengers a month using the FlexRoute service has continued to rise since it's inception in 1996. It was estimated that the program took three to four years before it fully established itself and became economically sustainable for the city. For innovative programs such as this one to be successful there needs to be a long-term focus and commitment of resources.

Inter Sector Cooperation

As the program is operated by the Traffic and Transport Authority, which also runs mainstream public transport in the city, there is the capacity for resource sharing that would not be possible otherwise. For example the service uses an advanced booking and routing system that handles all public transport in the city, including mainstream public transport, special transport services and community transport. The costs associated with such systems place them out of the reach of many community transport programs working independently of other public transport

Case Study 2: South East Neighbourhood Centre

Overview: The South East Neighbourhood Centre works in the local government area of Botany in Sydney, Australia. The area, which is a mix of urban and suburban areas, has a population of about 38,000 residents.

Project objectives: The centre's mission statement is "to provide access, equity, diversity, rights and participation to all people in all services we deliver to the community". The community transport arm is specifically targeted at relieving social isolation, giving the local community 'ownership' of their own transport and improving the social capital of the area by increasing community participation.

Services offered: Community Transport is one of several services offered by this multi-service provider. The community transport program offers two services, a fortnightly shopping trip with door-to-door 'rolls-royce' service both to and from the local shopping centre (the location of the neighbourhood centre), with two separate trips per day. In addition to the driver, a bus assistant aids passengers in carrying bags and getting onto and off the bus. Respite outings take eligible HACC (disabled and frail elderly) clients on a social outing once a week. Some recent excursions include a tour through the Southern Highlands area (a popular local provincial area), trips to the Sydney fish markets and local health seminars or relevant issues. The center also hires vehicles to local community groups for their own excursions.

The Model:

Vehicles: Two mini-buses, currently with nineteen seat capacity but with plans to switch to fifteen seat buses.

Drivers: The centre uses a paid driver. Volunteer use is being phased out due to the high costs involved in training volunteers, high turnover rates, high risks involved and operational difficulties.

Administrative Infrastructure: The centre has a full time transport administrator, one paid driver and one bus assistant. As the centre is a multi-service provider, there are a number of other administrative staff not directly responsible for the provision of community transport.

Target Group: HACC clients (the frail aged and disabled), with the intention of expanding the services to other transport disadvantaged groups such as youth.

Funding: The centre is largely funded by a combination of grants from various government departments such as the Ministry of Transport, Treasury and Department of Health and Aged Care.

Lessons to be learnt from this case study: The centre shows some of the benefits that can accrue from multi-service provision. By administering a number of community services from one office, there is the capacity to reduce overlap in administrative work, and reduce the cost of administration relative to service provision.

By centralising a range of services through one outlet at a large shopping center, the South East Neigbourhood Centre overcomes some of the difficulties that often arise for community transport providers in marketing their services. As the centre is located in a community hub many professionals such as Doctors and Occupational Therapists know of the center and it's services and can refer their clients to the centre.

Case Study 3: Kensington and Chelsea Community Transport (KCCT)

Overview: KCCT provides transport services in the royal boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea in London, England. In the 12 years since the projects inception, KCCT has grown to become the third largest community transport project in London.

Objectives: The organisation's core values include harnessing community resources, meeting individual needs and creating social opportunities through the provision of "low-cost, professional, user-friendly and flexible services to a variety of users, both groups and individuals" (KCCT, 2003:2).

Services:

(i) Shopper Services (Two areas: Kensington/Chelsea and Westminster)

The shopping services provide transport for mobility impaired local people with door-to-door transport to eight local shopping areas. Nine different trips are offered in each district per week between Monday and Friday. Each trip allows for one hour to be spent at the shopping center.

(ii) Community Car Scheme

KCCT runs the largest social car scheme in London providing pre-booked transport for individual members with mobility difficulties. Trained volunteer drivers use either KCCT's own fleet of wheelchair accessible vehicles or their own vehicles to drive eligible members to essential appointments.

(iii) Group Transport Services

KCCT's largest single program is hiring out minibuses to local community groups along with a trained driver. In 2002/03 KCCT had over 500 local community groups that participated in this project.

The model:

Vehicles: KCCT has a fleet of 27 vehicles, including fully accessible and standard minibuses, cars and people carriers, goods vans and a 41 seat low floor bus.

Drivers: KCCT has over 500 volunteer drivers participating in their programs and they also have a few paid drivers.

Administrative Structure: KCCT employs thirteen paid staff.

Lessons to be learnt from this case study: Kensington and Chelsea Community Transport show how all three levels of community transport can be provided by a single organization. The community car scheme services individuals that require a high level of service, the shopper services offer demand responsive trips for necessities and social purposes and the group transport services allow community groups to offer shared community transport services for their clients.

Case Study 4: Operation Lift, Brantford, Canada

Overview: Operation Lift is a non-profit transport provider, which has been operating in the city of Brantford, Canada, since 1975. Brantford is in Southern Ontario, Canada, with an urban population of 85,000, a population density of 1190/square km and an area of 72 square kilometers.

Objectives: "To provide affordable, accessible door to accessible door specialised transportation" (Dorothy DeVuono, Executive Director)

Services: The Operation Lift service offers clients door-to-door service to anywhere they need to travel in the city, with priority given to medical appointments. The service is available throughout the day 7:30am to 11:00pm Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 11:00pm Saturday and 8:00am to 8:00pm Sunday.

The Model:

Vehicles: Operation Lift has a fleet of ten mini-buses.

Drivers: All drivers are paid and certified by St John's Ambulance.

Administrative Structure: Operation Lift employs twelve full time drivers and nine administrative staff that administer the organisation on a day-to-day level. Volunteers are largely used to assist in fundraising activities and occasional office assistance. There is also a board of directors, with eight voluntary members.

Target Groups: The service is only available to people who fulfil the following three criterion:

1. Not able to climb or descend stairs
2. Not able to walk 175 metres
3. Unable to use conventional transport

Funding: Operation Lift receives 64% of their funding from the municipal government, with the remainder of their budget generated through fundraising and user charges. Government funding is not tied to service levels, instead it is based purely on the advocacy efforts of the organisation.

Case Study 5: Armagh Rural Transport, Northern Ireland

<u>Overview</u>: Armagh Rural Transport's (ART) operational area is throughout the Armagh city and district area, which has a total population of 53,400. ART provide transportation to individuals and groups within the Armagh community.

<u>Objectives</u>: Armagh Rural Transport was set up in March 2000 in a response to a need for accessible transport in the rural areas of Armagh. The broad objectives of the organisation are community based, rather than specifically targeted at the elderly or disabled.

<u>Services</u>:

Minibus and MPV hire services: ART currently have two sixteen-seater fully accessible minibuses and an 8 seater MPV. Group members can hire the vehicles, with the options of "with-driver" or "self-driver". The minibus can pick groups up on a door-to-door or group hire service.

Social Car Scheme: The social car scheme is available for members in the Armagh District who have difficulties using public or other forms of transport into town, health appointments, social activities, etc. Volunteers use their own cars to transport ART members to their destination.

Training: Armagh Rural Transport provides training programmes to all staff members and volunteers. Over the last 6 months ART have conducted the following training programmes: Disability Awareness; First Aid; Children (NI) Order 1995 & Child Protection; Drivers Assessors Training (DATS); Passenger Assistant Training (PATS), and MiDAS.

<u>The Model</u>:

Vehicles: ART has two fully accessible minibuses and an eight seat MPV. The social car scheme relies on volunteers using their own vehicles.

Drivers: ART's services rely on volunteer drivers, either by using their own car in the Social Car Scheme or driving the Minibus/People Carrier. Volunteers are reimbursed for the cost of the journey. All volunteers are provided the relevant training to undertake their duties correctly. To date ART have ten active volunteers, for the social car scheme and on either the minibus/people carrier. Volunteers are recruited through word of mouth or advertising in local papers. The drivers are assisted by two part-time passenger assistants, which are supplied by a local health scheme.

Administrative Structure: ART is managed by a voluntary management committee, which consists of thirteen members, who are representatives of the local community, statutory, voluntary organisations and individual members and ten Advisors. In addition, ART have a team of eight staff members: one full-time Project Officer, three part-time Administrators; three part-time Minibus Drivers and a Passenger Assistant.

Target Group: ART provide transportation to both individuals and community groups. Currently there are 131 registered members who use the minibus service and 155 social car members. ART memberships are based across the Armagh District and include, Senior Citizens, youth groups, church groups, people with a disability, and individuals/groups who are socially isolated.

Funding: ART receive 75% funding to operate the services provided. The core funding is from the Department of Regional Development – Rural Transport Fund, other funding is from EU funding and match funding against generated income and fund raising.

Marketing: ART market the project through road-shows; information days across the district. The increase of ART profile is completed through word of mouth, adverting in local papers,

networking between voluntary and statutory organisations, personal contact between local groups and individuals; leaving leaflet in health centres, Doctor surgeries, day centres.

Lessons to be learnt from this case study: ART shows how the community can participate in the provision of community transport, both through volunteers and the management structure. By including community organisations and statutory organisations in the management committee, the organisation increases community support for its services.

Case Study 6: Sheffield Community Transport

Overview: Sheffield Community Transport operates within the city of Sheffield in South Yorkshire, England. Sheffield is a mid-sized city with a population of approximately 540,000 people. Sheffield Community Transport is a large, non-profit, multi-service provider that has been working in the area since 1985.

Objectives: Sheffield Community Transport's mission statement is:

"*Mobility is the key to being able to participate fully in the community.*

Sheffield Community Transport seeks to be that key for people throughout the city who are disadvantaged through lack of appropriate transport.

It does this by providing accessible services which are flexible and responsive to meet a wide range of transport needs.

Sheffield Community Transport is committed to involving the communities it serves in the planning and development of the services it provides.

We recognise our responsibilities towards the future of our city and will work with staff, volunteers, local people and other agencies in Sheffield to improve training and employment prospects and increase the availability of facilities and resources in the city."

(Courtesy of Ian Jenkinson, General Manager SCT)

Existing Services: The city of Sheffield runs a dial-a-bus program. Dial-a-bus means that clients can call a central booking service on the morning of the trip and the bus will pick them up from their closest bus stop. The dial-a-bus service runs through fixed suburbs to a fixed timetable with some deviations within suburbs to both the city centre and two major shopping centres.

Services provided by Sheffield Community Transport:

City Ride: This service runs parallel to the dial-a-bus service run by the city of Sheffield. For people who are unable to use the dial-a-bus service, Sheffield Community Transport runs the City Ride program at no cost to the client. The City Ride service offers door-to-door service to any eligible client for trips to anywhere within the city of Sheffield boundaries. Due to the popularity of the program, clients are limited to two trips per week.

Crosslink/Joblink: These services are regular bus services that are designed to combat social exclusion in some of the most disadvantaged areas in Sheffield. The buses provide an affordable transport option directly to new industrial estates in Sheffield, offering access to employment opportunities for people living in areas where opportunities are currently limited. The service uses low floor minibuses which are accessible for most mobility impaired people, thus increasing the equity of access to the employment opportunities at the industrial estate.

Collective Travel: Sheffield Community Transport hires out a number of their vehicles for groups in the community at subsidised rates. These include minibuses for small groups, a coach for extended trips or larger groups and are currently considering adding motorised scooters for individuals to use to travel to work. All buses can be hired with or without a driver, with some volunteer drivers participating in the program as well.

Community Car Scheme: This program involves volunteers transporting clients in their own cars to a variety of services, including hospital visits, adult education centres, shopping or visiting friends. While the car scheme is usually for local trips, longer trips for holidays or visiting relatives have also been arranged. The car scheme can also be used to take children to child care and to other activities as a service for families that have difficulty using public transport.

The Sheffield Community Transport Model:

Vehicles: The majority of Sheffield Community Transport's vehicles are low-floor minibuses adapted for increased accessibility with wheelchair lifts and the capacity to accommodate motorised scooters on board. There is also a full sized coach (also adapted for increased accessibility) for hire and volunteer cars are used for the community car scheme.

Drivers: Volunteer drivers are used for the community car scheme and some vehicle hire and paid drivers run the bus services.

Client Groups: Sheffield Community Transport has a wider agenda than many other community transport providers with less access to resources. As well as the traditional clients of community transport programs, the elderly and mobility impaired, a broader social exclusion agenda is also pursued. This involves designing programs for transport disadvantaged groups within society such as single parent families, the unemployed and youth.

Administrative Infrastructure: Sheffield Community Transport is large by community transport standards with 96 staff. These include drivers, workshop staff, management, a training program and staff working on 'supported projects' with other agencies involved in social services. In addition to paid staff, Sheffield Community Transport has over 120 volunteers who contribute time.

Funding: Major funding comes from the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (county), Sheffield City Council (local), the Urban and Rural Bus Challenges (United Kingdom Government scheme) and South Yorkshire Objective 1 program (distributes funds from the European Union).