



“RIG-B seeks to make Bendigo disability friendly”

REPORT

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES IN GREATER BENDIGO

Survey designed, conducted, and analysed by
Regional Information Group – Bendigo (RIG-B)

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Two of the ten social determinants of health developed by the World Health Organisation are concerned with social exclusion and transport. *The Social Determinants of Health: The solid facts* (2003) identified that poverty and social exclusion have a major impact on health and that walking, cycling and less driving meant healthy transport.

Absolute poverty – a lack of the basic material necessities of life – continues to exist even in the richest countries of Europe. The unemployed, many ethnic minority groups, guest workers, disabled people, refugees and homeless people are at particular risk.

(Wilkinson and Marnot 2003: 16)

Healthy transport means less driving and more walking and cycling, backed up by better public transport. Cycling, walking and the use of public transport promote health in four ways. They provide exercise, reduce fatal accidents, increase social contact and reduce air pollution.

(Wilkinson and Marnot 2003: 28)

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GLOSSARY

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BLPCP	Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership
COGB	The City of Greater Bendigo
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DPCD	Department of Planning and Community Development
LGA	Local Government Area
LMR	Loddon Mallee Region
RIAC	Regional Information and Advocacy Council
RIG-B	Regional Information Group – Bendigo
RRC	Rural and Regional Committee
RSED	Relative Socio-Economic-Disadvantage
SES	Socio-economic status
VSG	Victorian State Government

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All participants who filled in the transport survey.

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PART A

BACKGROUND

RIG-B (Regional Information Group – Bendigo) was established in March 2010 as a pilot programme of RIAC (Regional Information and Advocacy Council). RIG-B's role is to identify issues that affect residents of Greater Bendigo who are living with long term or permanent health conditions, and their families and carers. RIG-B seeks to make Bendigo disability friendly.

RIG-B's first project was to hold a meeting on 24 June 2010 in the Bendigo Town Hall, where members of the public were able to voice their concerns. The aim of this forum was to hear from as many people as possible who have health conditions and their family members, rather than carers, support workers, or support agencies. There were 63 submissions made regarding multiple issues. These included access, personal safety, housing, transport, financial, parking, and medical issues. Our findings were presented at another public meeting on 14 October 2010, at the Returned Services League Club in Bendigo.

RIAC, as part of their systemic advocacy policy, began to advocate on the issues raised with the organisations responsible, and letters requesting information and comment were sent to Bendigo Taxis, Department of Transport and the City of Greater Bendigo Council (COGB). A meeting was arranged with Mr Barry Secombe, Director, Community Wellbeing, COGB to discuss issues relating to council. Responses received from the above organisations were presented at the meeting on 14 October 2010. A letter in response to RIAC's meeting with Mr Secombe was received by RIAC on 17 November 2010. Unfortunately, Mr Secombe resigned from his position shortly after and his replacement did not start their employment with council until May 2011. RIAC is now in the process of restarting discussions with the new incumbent.

One of the main areas of concern raised at last year's forum was the provision of public transport services. As this is an issue affecting the whole community we decided to conduct a survey of public transport services, specifically bus, taxi and train services, in Bendigo.

NB: This public transport survey is an all population survey not targeted at any particular demographic.

GREATER BENDIGO

General description

Bendigo is located 150 kilometres north-west of Victoria's capital, Melbourne, and is within commutable distance from Melbourne. Public transport is available with trains and buses from all areas servicing this major regional centre. Bendigo's reliance on manufacturing and agriculture has declined due to its population increase, which has resulted in suburbs becoming more residential. Education, health, and social assistance, along with a strong Federal Government, State Government, and Local Administration sector, form the major employers and service providers to Bendigo. However, retail and manufacturing still have a presence. Bendigo is situated within the Local Government Area (LGA) statistical profile of the Loddon Mallee Region (LMR) (CIV, 2006; Stenton, 2011: 67).

Statistics relative to the Loddon Mallee Region and the City of Greater Bendigo

The population of the LMR region is estimated to be around 6% of the Victorian population (approximately 309,450 persons) with those living in the Greater Bendigo area comprising 33% of the LMR population ([Reid, 2011](#)).

The Victorian State Government (VSG) estimates in *Victoria in Future 2008: Loddon* that Bendigo's population will grow at a rate of about 1.7% annually and will top 135,000 by 2026. In the next four and a half decades the overall population in regional Victoria is projected to increase by 700,000 persons, with approximately half this growth occurring by 2026. Past migration patterns indicate that the majority of people moving into the LMR come from Melbourne and outlying LGAs such as Hume. The general trend of an increase in aging population will continue, with both over-60 years-of-age and over-85 years-of-age groups in the Loddon region projected to more than double by 2026, which will represent 21% of Bendigo's population. By comparison, numbers of people aged 18 and under is only expected to increase from 53,400 (2006) to 60,300 in 2026 (VSG, 2008).

The numbers of young people between the ages of 0-24 years in the COGB are calculated to be approximately 33%. Due to the demand for more public housing and welfare services, this number is expected to increase and, therefore, will also impact on the capacity of public services, including transport, to provide for the projected needs of those who will move closer to service locations. Table 1 shows the age breakdown of young people in Bendigo (as of 2008) including future projections to 2026 (Hood, 2008; [Reid, 2011](#); RRC, 2010; [Stenton, 2011](#)).

Table 1: Recent and projected growth of young people in Bendigo

Age	2008	2011	2016	2021	2026
0 to 4	6,015	7,149	7,520	7,709	7,850
5 to 14	13,621	13,967	15,466	17,185	17,834
15 to 24	14,316	14,973	15,537	15,997	17,647

Source: *Victoria in the Future (VSG – DPCD, 2008) Cited in (COGB, 2011)*.

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that seasonally-adjusted Average Weekly Total earnings of fulltime adult workers in Victoria were \$963.30 for the February 2011 quarter compared with \$1005 average for Australia (ABS-2, 2011: 5, 16). The lowest positive average annual rates of growth occurred in Loddon, at 1.4%. In the same period, some LGAs in the Wimmera and Mallee experienced negative average annual growth rates: West Wimmera (-11.2%), Hindmarsh (-8.7%), Yarriambiack (-5.6%) and Buloke (-2.4%) (ABS-1, 2011:)

The Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership (BLPCP) in their publication, *Community Welfare Profile 2010*, identified that gross individual incomes within the LMR are considerably lower than elsewhere in Victoria. For instance, workers in Greater Bendigo (9%) and Loddon (11%) earn a gross weekly income of between \$250-349 compared with 7% of people in the rest of Victoria earning the same amount. Of the two largest pay groups in Greater Bendigo, by percentage, one earns half the amount of the other; 13% earn between \$500-649 whilst 12% earn between \$1000-1199. However, by town, most workers in Bendigo earn between \$150-249 (17%) followed by \$250-349 and \$400-599 (16% each) and \$600-799 (11%) (BLPCP, 2010). These figures are supported by Stenton's report on local government statistics for the Loddon Mallee report.

Table 2: Some general statistics for LGA, Greater Bendigo

STATISTICS FOR GREATER BENDIGO	LGA MEASURE	VICTORIA MEASURE
The percentage of people in Greater Bendigo close to public transport	64.7%	72.6%
Percentage of greater Bendigo population earning under \$400 per week	49.7%	45.8%
Percentage of households earning less than \$650 per week	37.2%	30.6%
Families with children whose weekly income is less than \$650	22.3%	17.9%
Households spending more than 40% in rent or mortgage	8%	9%
Single parent families	18%	15.4%
Households with no car	8.2%	9.2%
Households with car more 10 years old	53.9%	46.2%
Unemployment rate	6.4%	5.5%
Percentage of people who are obese	56.9%	48.6%
People not meeting physical activity guidelines	31.1%	27.4%
Median rent for 3 bedroom home	\$250	n/a

Source: '2010 Local government area statistical profiles – Loddon Mallee region' (Stenton, G 2011: 70-73)

Bendigo is a regional centre attracting people needing welfare services. The Federal Electorate of Bendigo is classed as having the second lowest socio-economic status (SES) in Australia. Of the 10 local government areas that encompass Bendigo, most are classed as disadvantaged (Pope, 2011; Reid, 2011; RRC, 2010; Stenton, 2011 : 73). In the DPCD's latest publication, *Change and Disadvantage in the Loddon Mallee Region* (Pope, 2011), by using the index of Relative Socio-Economic-Disadvantage (RSED) it was found that 40 out of 77 towns, or town suburbs, in the LMR were lower than the Victorian average. 12 of these are within Greater Bendigo: Bendigo, California Gully, Eaglehawk, Flora Hill, Golden Square, Ironbark, Kangaroo Flat, Long Gully, North Bendigo, Sailors Gully, and White Hills. When averaged, the RSED of these 12 areas, at 785, is 201 points lower than the Victorian State Average of 986 (Pope, 2011).

It is imperative that with the changing demographics of Bendigo and the outlying areas it services, along with commuters travelling to the city for employment, study, or recreation, a public transport system can sufficiently cater for the needs of all present and future users. There is no doubt that Bendigo's transport services need to take into account the rising population in general, but must also include due consideration to the 20% of the general population who identify themselves as having a disability as well as the projected future increases in persons over 60 years-of-age ([Reid, 2011](#); [Stenton, 2011](#)).

AIM OF SURVEY

The survey aimed to identify what public transport services people in Bendigo use, what they use them for, how effective they are in meeting user needs, what kinds of experiences patrons have, and the reasons why people do not use public transport.

We hoped to identify issues that could be easily rectified at a local government level, and those that will severely impact the community if relevant authorities at local, state, and federal government levels do not address infrastructure requirements with regard to projected increases in population.

STATEMENT OF LIMITATIONS

The survey is limited in that it could not be conducted at a number and variety of locations originally considered, including Epsom Shopping Village, White Hills Shopping Strip, Huntly, Oak Street industrial business sector, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, and the Marketplace.

- **Funding**

With limited funding for this project, we concentrated on using our organisational and personal networks to promote the survey. Notices were sent to free community service noticeboards locally – the Bendigo Miner, Southern Cross TV, Bendigo Library, Centro Lansell Shopping Centre, and La Trobe University.

To draw attention to the survey, participants were given the opportunity to enter a draw to win one of three food hampers. There was no charge to any participant who entered the draw. In order to maintain participant confidentiality a separate entry form was supplied for those who wished to enter the hamper draw. The winners were FM, KW, and TC.

- **Locations**

The **Marketplace**, the largest shopping centre in Bendigo, is a hub for transport services. The centre is adjacent to the train station and the bus terminal and has a taxi rank in front of the building facing Mitchell Street. Unfortunately, the Marketplace has a stringent policy that does not allow not-for-profit community groups to set up stalls in the centre without being charged the daily commercial fee of \$400 plus GST. As this cost was prohibitive we were unable to use the Marketplace as a survey location. We found The Marketplace management's attitude concerning as it is certainly in their commercial interests to understand how, when, and why patrons access the centre, and whether public transport may be a factor.

Centro Lansell Shopping Centre management, on the other hand, were very supportive of the project. They charged a small management fee of \$22.00 plus a nominal charge of \$11.00 to use their table and chairs. The day the survey was conducted was an off-pay week for pensioners, which may have affected numbers.

The Bendigo Library, the alternative central location to the Marketplace, was offered free, as was Strath Village shopping centre in Strathdale. Due to the volunteer shortage, it was only possible to conduct a short survey at Strath Village. Here, a number of elderly patrons were happy to have a chat about transport but did not wish to fill in a survey or have someone fill it in for them. Issues they raised related to fear of what would happen when they were unable to drive a car; driving only during the day, no longer going out on night-time activities; a reliance on relatives in Melbourne to drive to Bendigo to take the person to medical appointments or family gatherings elsewhere in the state; lack of knowledge about transport options; no assistance to get on and off the bus and/or train when travelling solo. These understandable fears mean many people hardly ever leave home except for a shopping visit once a week.

Other locations, such as the shopping and industrial employments hubs at Epsom and White Hills, as well as the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE were considered, but due to other commitments we were unable to find volunteers who could be available on the proposed dates and times.

- **Payment**

As RIG-B is a volunteer organisation, no-one who provided their time and service was paid.

- **Stall set-ups**

As most of our volunteers live with a disability and/or chronic health problems, or care for someone who does, preference was given to locations where tables and chairs were easily accessible and did not have to be supplied (as was required at Strath Village).

- **Volunteers**

Due to work, family, study commitments, and health problems there were fewer volunteers than expected during the time frame in which the surveys were to be conducted. This meant that available volunteers weren't free on the dates and times required and surveys were unable to be conducted in as many locations as originally intended. For these reasons each location was restricted to one visit with a maximum of five hours.

METHODOLOGY

Survey templates and question styles, provided by free websites such as *Survey Monkey*, were considered and rejected as being too general and not specific enough to enable a broad range of data to be collected. We finally designed our own questions and created the survey form using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

The survey consisted of five sections of multiple choice questions. Each question also had a section for participants to provide additional information relative to that question. At the end of the survey there were two further sections; one for additional comments, and one where participants who did not use public transport could indicate why.

Demographic – 8 questions covering post codes, age bracket, marital status, employment, education, dependents, and gender.

General – 10 questions covering usage, public transport services used and why, travel locations, whether access assistance is required, concession fares, suitability and timeliness of links to other services, and experiences of specific difficulties.

Bus Services, Taxi Services, and Train Services – 12 questions in each section covering amount of use, destinations and for what activities, cost, timetables, whether services meet user needs, satisfaction with services, and suggestions for improvements. The questions were often identical in each of these sections. This was to determine specific uses of each service and how they compared with each other.

To maintain confidentiality, it was optional as to whether participants wished to identify themselves. Participants were asked to answer questions that applied to them and ignore those that did not.

- **Dates, times, location where surveys were conducted, and numbers collected.**

At each location, a RIG-B committee member was present as supervisor. At all sites some participants requested a survey to take home and fill in. We allowed one week after each site visit to receive any additional surveys. Surveys were posted to all RIG-B members. Within the social sciences, numbers of survey participants are determined by various factors: what, whom, and where is being studied. In this survey, limitations meant it was important to gather information from different locations around Bendigo. 143 responses, while not a large number, is sufficient to provide for generalisation to the wider population, along with being able to be replicated (Furze et al., 2008: 46; Yin, K. R. 2009: 38).

Table 3: Total surveys collected

SURVEY LOCATIONS	SURVEYS COMPLETED
La Trobe University	59
Eaglehawk	64
Centro Lansell	11
Bendigo Library	9
Totals	143

Source: RIG-B (2011)

La Trobe University *Tuesday, 22 March 2011 – 10am-2pm*
RIG-B Supervisor - Isolde
Total number of surveys collected = 59

Strath Village, Bendigo Library, Postal receipts
Thursday, 31 March 2011 – 9.00-11.30am
RIG-B Supervisor - Isolde
Friday, 15 April 2011 – 10am-3pm
RIG-B Supervisors – Isolde and Julia Birch
Total number of surveys collected = 9

Centro Lansell *Thursday, 7 April 2011 – 9.00am-2.00pm*
RIG-B Supervisor – Isolde and Michael Whatham
Total number of surveys collected = 11

Eaglehawk *Friday, 29 April 2011 – 7.30am-8.30am (Our Shed Breakfast)*
RIG-B Supervisor - Isolde
Saturday, 30 April 2011 – 8.30am-2.00pm (Artist's Market)
RIG-B Supervisor - Isolde
Monday, 2 May 2011 – 10.30am-11.30am (Our Place)
RIG-B Supervisor – Michael Whatham
Total number of surveys collected = 64

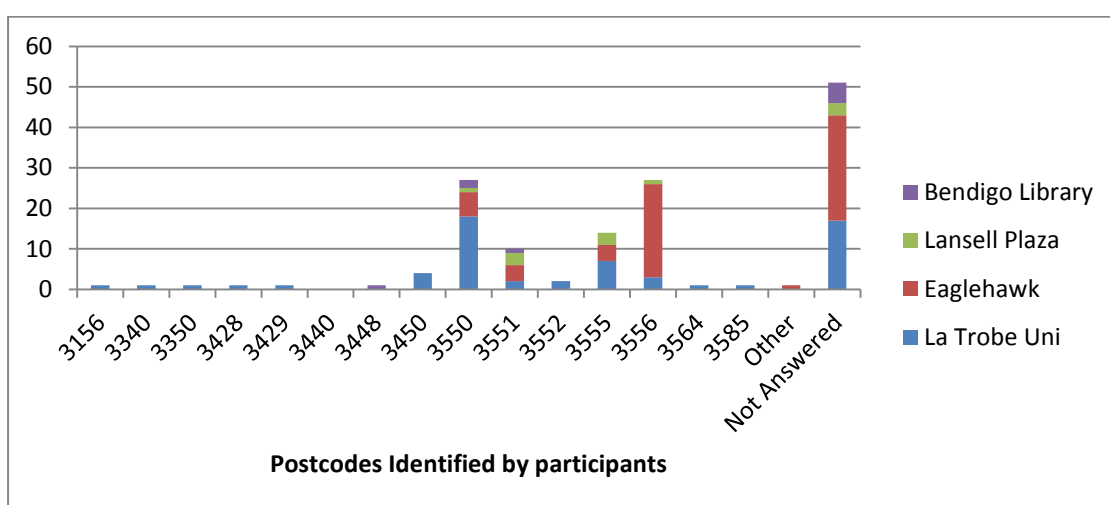
PART B

DATA REPORT

PART 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

Postcodes

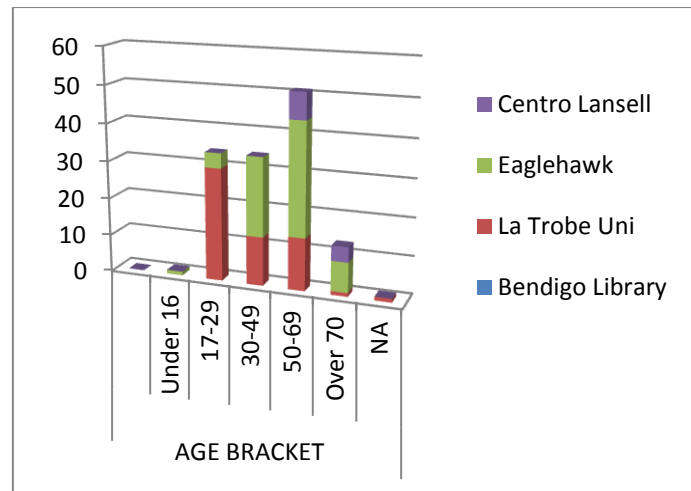
Participants who identified their postcodes came from as far afield as Swan Hill, Bacchus Marsh, and Sunbury and were travelling to Bendigo for specific reasons, i.e. university study. Of the participants who answered this question, 56% reside within postcodes 3550-3556, which relates to the City of Greater Bendigo area. More than a third did not answer this question.



Age Bracket

Participants range in age from under 16 years to over 70 years, with the largest group being between 50-69 years (37%). The combined age group, 17-49 years made up 52% of total participants.

- 17-29 years** As expected, more than half of La Trobe University participants (51%) were in this category. One third of participants at the Bendigo library were also in this category.
- 30-49 years** One third of participants from Eaglehawk were in this category as were 22% of all La Trobe participants.
- 50-69 years** This group represented 47% of participants from Eaglehawk, 64% from Centro Lansell, and 22% and 24% respectively from Bendigo Library and La Trobe University.
- Over 70 years** This group made up 10% of the total participants.



Marital Status

More than half of total participants (54%) identified as being single or never married, with 67% of La Trobe University participants in this category. Over a third of total participants (39%) are married or living in de facto relationships. It is of note that the highest number of married participants live in Eaglehawk (25 of 39 participants in this category). Two respondents identified themselves as being widows.

Employment

Of the 46% of total participants who identified as being in any kind of employment, 34% are in fulltime employment. The largest number in this category came from Eaglehawk (16 out of 23 participants), one of whom is self-employed. Part-time employment made up 13% (half of total participants in this group were from La Trobe University) and casual employment represents 17%. The majority of those in casual employment are university students (23 out of 25 participants in this category). Of those participants who identified as being not in employment (8%), the majority were from Eaglehawk. One respondent is a stay-at-home dad. No participants from La Trobe University listed themselves as being unemployed. From La Trobe university, just under half (49%) identified themselves as students and one is also a fulltime carer. A number of La Trobe University participants also identified as being in casual or part-time employment in addition to being a student. The largest number of retirees was from Eaglehawk (22 out of 32 participants in this category).

NB: The full-time employment rate in Eaglehawk may be skewed as the largest number of surveys for this locale were gathered at the Friday community breakfast at Our Shed. This weekly event is actively supported and attended by a large number of business and community leaders from the wider community.

Highest level of education attained

39% of all participants indicated they had had a tertiary education i.e. university or TAFE graduate. In addition, those who had completed Year 12 represented 28% of total participants. It is of note that 13 out of 37 university graduates and one third of TAFE graduates were from the Eaglehawk location. 14% of total participants indicated their highest level of education as being Year 10 and a further 13% indicated Other. Of these, two indicated they left school in Years 8 and 9, and one was a nurse.

NB: The high number participants from the Eaglehawk location who are university graduates may have been due to the number of community and business leaders from all over Bendigo who support and regularly attend the community breakfast held there every Friday morning. As mentioned, this was one of the times and locations where the survey was conducted.

Current Study

Just under half of all participants (49%) are not currently studying. As expected, the majority of those studying were from La Trobe University (55 of total respondents). A very high number of those who did not answer this question were from Eaglehawk (49 out of 70 participants). 9% of total participants are currently undertaking post graduate studies. One respondent is studying at Continuing Education and 10% answered Other for this question.

NB: One student at La Trobe is also studying for a TAFE diploma as well as an undergraduate degree. Another is studying for a TAFE certificate in addition to university study.

Parental Status

26% of all participants identified themselves as being parents, 23% full-time, and 3% part-time. Almost half are at La Trobe University (15 from 37 participants). 16 respondents commented that they weren't parents, children had left home, or were grandparents.

Number of Dependents

50 out of 147 responses to this question indicated they have dependents (24 had children under 18, 23 had adult children and three had family members). One respondent indicated they had four dependents and 11 Eaglehawk respondents indicated they had up to three dependent children under the age of 18 years.

Analysis/Indicators: As one of the survey locations was the free community breakfast held every Friday morning at Our Shed, Eaglehawk, this may be an indicator that families in this suburb may be experiencing increased financial stress. It may also be an indicator that communities severely affected by natural disasters require long term support from the wider community. Further research recommended.

NB: Our Place was originally set up as an emergency support centre to help those affected by the Black Saturday fires of 7 February 2009, which had a severe impact on Eaglehawk and adjoining suburbs. Our Shed and the on-going community breakfasts were established in 2010 as a means of creating and maintaining social networks within the community.

Gender

84 women, 45 men, 5 other, 9 not answered.

PART 2: GENERAL

How often do you use public transport?

Slightly more than a third (34%) of all participants use public transport 1-5 times per week. Just under a third (31%) only use public transport 1-2 times a year. A further 21% use it 1-5 times per month. 10% of participants never use public transport and 3% did not answer the question.

What public transport services do you use?

Most participants indicated they used more than one public transport service. The train is used the most (73%) followed by the bus (63%). Taxis are used by 35% of respondents. Several respondents also indicated they use trams, however, only one specified this was in Melbourne. It is most likely the other respondents also use trams in Melbourne as opposed to Bendigo. One respondent commented that because the bus is so expensive the service was rarely used.

What do you use public transport for?

Most users of public transport identified more than one use. It is significant that most use it for visiting friends and family (40%) and for shopping (36%). However, 16% of participants use public transport to get to work, 23% use it to get to TAFE or university and 18% use it to attend health appointments. Several participants identified specific activities that public transport was used for: taking children to extra-curricular activities, attending writing workshops, meetings or business in Melbourne, and for Centrelink appointments.

Analysis/indicators: Public transport does not meet essential needs where punctuality and reliability is important – i.e. getting to work, university, TAFE, school, or attending health appointments. It is more likely to be used when planning a day out and where being somewhere at a certain time is not critical.

Where do you normally go?

Most people use public transport to access more than one destination. The greatest use of public transport is to use the train to go to Melbourne, which applied to 67% of all participants. 80% of La Trobe University participants use the train to go to Melbourne. This group also indicated that getting to Bendigo CBD and suburbs, the university/TAFE comprised more than half of their public transport use. 91% of respondents from Centro Lansell at Kangaroo Flat, and 47% of respondents from Eaglehawk, use public transport to get to the CBD. Other regular destinations identified were Castlemaine and Swan Hill.

If you require assistance to use public transport, are there people who regularly help you to use public transport?

This question was not applicable to 51% of participants. Of those that do require assistance (70 from 143 participants), 39 reported No, and 14 reported Sometimes. Only nine said there was always help available.

NB: A number of respondents identified that there were people to ask for help rather than people who were physically able and willing to help those experiencing mobility issues.

Why do you use public transport?

There were multiple answers to this question (225 from 143 total participants). The main reason is convenience (52%), and cost (34%), although six indicated they were making a choice to help the environment. 7% of participants identified themselves as being disabled, 17% do not drive and 20% do not have a car. Of La Trobe University participants, 24% do not drive and 20% do not have a car, which reflects the younger demographic in this group who rely on public transport. Cost and convenience was reported by 47% of La Trobe University participants as reasons for using public transport. Eaglehawk and Centro Lansell also reported high numbers of those who do not drive (9 out of 24 total respondents in this group). Of those who identified themselves as disabled 70% came from Eaglehawk and Centro Lansell. Just under half of those participants who do not have a car also came from Eaglehawk and Centro Lansell (13 out of 28 respondents).

Analysis/Indicators: Non-ownership of a vehicle and an inability to drive due to health and/or disability issues, and/or inability to afford to purchase, run, and maintain a car, and/or too young to get a driving means people have no choice but to use public transport. That 20% of all participants reported not having a car indicates a significant proportion of Bendigo's population may have no other options but to rely on public transport.

Are you a Concession Card holder?

62% reported yes to this question. 54 respondents identified the type of concession card held, which included Disability Pension, Taxi Directorate Card, Health Care Card, Student Concession Card, Seniors Card, Victorian Public Transport Concession card, Low Income Card, Age Pension and WA Widow Allowance.

Analysis/Indicators: Low income earners and those on Centrelink benefits are more likely to use public transport than those who are not. This is due to several factors: they cannot afford to use a car, concession fares make public transport cost-effective, or because they have no choice. However, other participants indicated environmental issues including carbon footprints as the reason they preferred to use public transport.

Does the public transport you use have suitable and timely links to other forms of transport?

62% said Yes to this question compared with 22% who recorded No or Other. Participants commented that buses seldom made timely connections to train services leaving for Melbourne, which meant they often missed the train. The bus connecting with the 5.18pm train service to Melbourne arrives at Bendigo station when the train is leaving. There is a lot of time wasted waiting for connecting services. Regular users of bus services to and from the university commented that they are overcrowded, very cramped, and often there are no seats. Train delays on services from Melbourne also affect connecting bus services on arrival at Bendigo. Passengers wishing to travel to and from Melbourne on late night services comment that there are extensive waits for connecting services. Participants also commented on the difficulty of obtaining taxi service information now that the call centre has been located outside Bendigo.

Analysis/indicator: Whether participants considered there were suitable and timely links to other public transport services depends on whether the person is a frequent user of public transport for everyday activities, or whether the outing is a planned activity i.e. catching the train to Melbourne to visit family or friends, or to attend a special event. The figure of 62% who believe there are suitable and timely links to other public transport services may show

an inaccurate reading as this depends on frequency of use. Participants who use public transport occasionally fit their travel plans around existing routes and timetables.

Analysis/Indicator: For regular users, the answer is a resounding NO – particularly for respondents from Centro Lansell and La Trobe University where bus connections to train services are not suitable or timely. This issue requires more research across the whole of the Greater Bendigo region.

Have you experienced, or anyone you know, specific issues related to using public transport?

More than a third of the total respondents answered Yes to this question, which represented more than half of the total of La Trobe University respondents, almost half of Bendigo Library respondents, over a third of Centro Lansell respondents, and just under a quarter of Eaglehawk respondents. 13% did not answer this question.

Issues experienced by participants related to missing connecting services because of delays, poor timetabling, cancelled services, missing stops, overcrowding, ticketing problems, and access difficulties. Train passengers commented on having to stand from Melbourne to Sunbury because there are often no seats available. Passengers using wheelchairs have been left at the train station, have waited well over an hour for a taxi or not had a taxi turn up. Participants reported access difficulties for family and friends who use mobility aids such as wheelchairs and scooters on all public transport services.

V/Line passengers from Castlemaine commented that the arbitrary decision making as to when passengers are permitted to take a bicycle on board is frustrating, especially when bicycles are used to get to and from work, home, or university because of unsuitable connecting services. This creates enormous stress for parents unable to collect children from school and after school activities on time. Passengers report needing to leave work early so they can catch a bus home.

Lack of evening, weekend, and public holiday services isolate participants reliant on public transport. This also affects students who have lectures on public holidays as well as increased travel costs incurred on these days. Other issues include toilet doors on train services opening while being used, angry bus drivers, rudeness, violence, aggressive behaviour of other passengers, loud music, and mess.

Analysis/Indicator: The issue of access for bicycles and wheelchairs on public transport services needs to be addressed so it becomes more equitable. Bus services on evenings, weekends and public holidays need to be reviewed as do services to outer suburbs e.g. Strathfieldsaye. Customer service standards as well as the safety and security of passengers are of concern.

BUS SERVICES

How many times a week do you use the bus?

27% of respondents *NEVER* use a bus. Although only one respondent said it was because it was unsuitable, it is probable this is a major reason why people do not use public transport. Of those who use the bus regularly, 20% use it 3-5 times a week, and 10% 1-2 times. Of those who use the bus less frequently, 3% use it 3-5 times per month, 9% 1-2 times per month, and 24% use it occasionally i.e. once or twice a year. Two respondents use the bus more than eight times per week and one respondent uses a bus seven days a week.

Where do you normally go?

Over half (52%) use the bus to travel to the CBD and just under a quarter use it to travel to Uni/TAFE (24%) or Bendigo's suburbs (23%). 17% said they used the bus to travel to Melbourne. One respondent uses the Shepparton Line.

What do you use the bus for?

By far, the largest use for bus transport is to go shopping (41%) followed by visiting family and friends (24%), getting to Uni/TAFE (22%) and health appointments (20%). *The least use is to get to work (10%) and for sport/exercise/recreation (13%)*. Almost half of those who use the bus to attend health appointments are from Eaglehawk. Most use the bus for multiple activities (243 uses from 143 participants).

Of the La Trobe respondents, 56% use the bus to get to university or work (it must be assumed that for some of these respondents their place of employment is La Trobe University as this was an all population survey). This group also represent the highest percentage (50%) of those using the bus for sport/exercise/recreation.

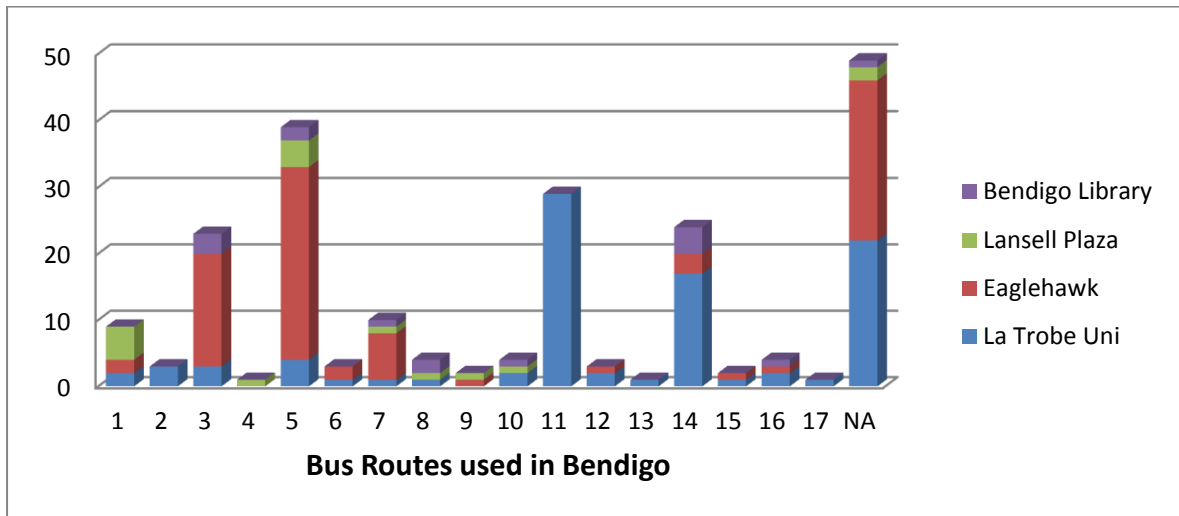
Analysis/indicator: As bus users combine activities e.g. shopping, visiting, and health appointments in the one trip, are there sufficient bus services to 'corridor areas' where health providers, shopping centres and shopping strips are located? Identification of present and future medical and allied health service hubs, public and private hospitals, medical specialists, shopping centres and strips is indicated. This would identify where there is a need for new and/or rescheduled public transport services to and from these areas. There is an opportunity to increase patronage by improving services for workers that get to them to and from their places of employment in a timely manner.

Which bus routes do you mostly use?

All 17 bus routes in Bendigo were identified as being used by survey participants to some degree. The bus routes most used were 5 (27%), 11 (20%), 14 (17%), and 3 (16%). Respondents also indicated they used more than one route e.g. routes 6, 2, and 14; routes 1, 3, 5, 11, and 14; routes 3, 9, and 12; routes 4, 5, and 7. Least-used routes are 4, 9, 13, 15, and 17 (all reported 1% usage), and 12 (2%). The remaining bus routes were used by 3-7% of respondents.

Analysis/Indicators: As participants use buses to travel into the CBD where they are required to change to another route, are routes connecting with each other in ways that suit users rather than service providers? Survey participants in other suburbs such as Epsom, Spring

Gully, and Strathfieldsaye, indicated that lack of service was a reason they did not use the bus. More research in this area is indicated.



Are there enough bus stops on the routes you use?

Most people are happy with the number of bus stops available (62%). However, there is still a significant number (18 out of the 105 respondents who answered this question) who say No. Specifically identified was Route 12 at Crook Street.

Analysis/Indicators: More research in this area is required as to what routes require more stops and in what locations.

Are there enough bus shelters to protect you from the weather?

Of the 102 respondents who answered this question, 61 said No. Route 15 was specifically identified as lacking sufficient shelters. Other issues identified were that bus shelters cannot be accessed by wheelchair or scooter, there are shelters too small to accommodate the numbers of passengers (specifically children) using them, and shelters in the CBD do not protect passengers from the weather.

Analysis/Indicators: This issue is significant and needs to be addressed by relevant authorities especially with regard to the access issues identified. Bus shelters with appropriate weather protection may encourage more people to use bus services.

What does it cost on average per journey/week?

Most respondents indicated that each journey cost under \$10 (45%), while 10% indicated that each journey cost between \$10-20. Participants reported that a round trip to Castlemaine costs \$35 and a trip to Melbourne \$30.

Analysis/Indicator: For those wishing to use a bus 3-5 times per week it could cost up to \$50 per week (maximum of \$10 per return journey x 5 trips). This cost could be prohibitive for those on low incomes, leading to increased social isolation, health problems and reduced community engagement (Refer to WHO Social Determinants on Health regarding social exclusion on page 2 and local statistics on page 8).

Does the timetable and routes suit your needs?

For more than half of La Trobe University users, the answer was No (23 out of 42 users). In general, 43% of the total participants reported that the timetable was suitable.

Participants report that unsuitable bus service timetables meant long waiting times, and that they would use the bus more if services were more frequent. Services to Shepparton, outlying areas of Bendigo, and local suburb routes where services run hourly (e.g. Route 16), and poor evening, weekend and public holiday services do not meet user needs. The Route 12 bus drops passengers off from La Trobe University but does not return via the same route which creates difficulties for residents in nearby streets. Of particular note were Eaglehawk route timetables which do not allow passengers to get to work by 9am, arrival and departure times that do not match timetables at bus stops, and that the bus route does not extend far enough down Sailor's Gully Road to Eaglehawk North Primary School.

Analysis/Indicator: For regular users who have to be at specific places at particular times, current routes and timetables are not meeting user needs. Infrequent users report that they plan their activities around the bus timetable and route so are less concerned with suitability of routes and timetables. A review of routes, stops and timetables is indicated.

How many children do you have that use public transport to travel to school including schools for children with special needs?

Most respondents (87%) indicated that they had no children using the bus or did not answer. Of those who have one or two children using the bus to get to school, half came from La Trobe University respondents and half came from Eaglehawk respondents. Only one respondent had a child with special needs who used a bus to get to school.

Does the bus service meet your needs?

Of the 143 respondents to the survey 45% responded Yes, 27% did not answer this question, 16% responded No to this question, and 11% reported Other. *20% of La Trobe University respondents and 18% of Centro Lansell participants indicated they were unhappy with the service.*

Users commented that they have to organise proposed appointments and activities around available services, information has always been hard to obtain and remains so, and that they would use buses more if services were more frequent and reliable. Bus services to outer suburbs such as Route 16 are too infrequent. Early and late services, in general, could be improved.

Analysis/Indicator: The bus service is not meeting the needs of those who have few transport options i.e. low income earners, pensioners, students, and residents of outer suburbs. Access to timetables and route information is perceived to be difficult – for instance buses no longer carry timetables.

Are you satisfied with the bus service you receive?

This question was more directed to customer service. Over half of respondents (52%) are happy most of the time, 11% some of the time, 9% responded Other and 27% did not answer the question.

Can the bus service be improved?

Of those who answered this question (92 out of 143 respondents), 76 said Yes. Bus users provided very clear indications as to where they thought improvements can be made:

- Better timetabling so services run on time and connect with trains arriving at, or departing from, Bendigo station. Buses should automatically connect with all train arrival and departure times.
- Coordination of services with other public and private amenities e.g. opening and closing times of the cinema, university library, clubs, pubs, restaurants, and other transport services.
- Bus timetables listed at bus stops need to be kept up to date.
- Improved customer service from bus drivers – safer drivers who are more friendly and helpful, do not skip stops, or drive off when passengers are waiting to board or are not seated.
- More buses at peak periods to reduce overcrowding.
- More services at weekends, evenings, and public holidays.
- Centrally located centre with a separate area where passengers can comfortably sit and wait, access services, and obtain up-to-date information.

Analysis/Indicator: Organisations supplying Bendigo's bus services would benefit from auditing current services and reviewing their operations with specific reference to customer service, customer access, timetabling, and connecting links to public amenities, events and other transport services.

SECTION FOUR: TAXI SERVICES

How often do you use a taxi?

Approximately two thirds of all participants use a taxi and just over a third never use them or did not answer the question. Of taxi users, half use them only once or twice a year, a quarter use them 1-2 times a month, and *approximately 20% use them more than once a week.*

What time of day/night do you use a taxi?

NB: The time frames of 9am-3pm, 3pm-12am, and 12am-9am were selected to coincide with taxi shifts.

Taxis are used at any time over a 24-hour period, with late afternoon and evening (3pm-12am) being the most popular, followed by overnight (12am-9am). Day time use (9am-3pm) was the least preferred time.

What do you use a taxi for?

Most users (28%) reported that they use a taxi for multiple activities and for reasons other than those listed in the survey i.e. to get home after a night out or when other transport options (buses) are not available. This included late night returns from Melbourne. Other reasons included accompanying family members unable to use other forms of transport, for emergencies, charity work, attending meetings, when the family car is not available, and transporting children to childcare. One participant uses taxis to transport a family member with special needs to daily activities.

The next main reason people use taxis is for shopping (17%) followed by health appointments (15%) and visiting (11%). A significant number of participants from La Trobe University (over 20%) reported they use a taxi to get to and from work and/or the university. The largest group who use taxis for shopping came from Eaglehawk (50% of users in this category).

Analysis/Indicator: As Bendigo has the second lowest socio-economic status in Australia, participants who have no alternative but to use taxis to get home with their grocery shopping may be those least able to afford it. That a significant number of participants from La Trobe University use taxis reflect the lack of timely links and suitable connections to other forms of public transport already identified.

Where do you normally go?

Most users travel to Bendigo's CBD (43%) and suburbs (27%). A surprising 10% of participants use a taxi to travel to Melbourne.

Analysis/Indicator: Other public transport services do not meet the needs of certain sections of the community, particularly those on low incomes, students, and pensioners forcing them to use taxi services to travel to and from the CBD and the suburbs.

What is the main reason you use taxis?

More than a quarter of those who use taxis do so because they are disabled or have poor mobility (22 from 92 users). Almost half of all participants indicated they use taxis for other reasons. These included convenience, safety, getting home after a night out, when train and bus services are not running or do not suit, do not own a car, no other choice, too much shopping to carry, in bad weather, and when appointments do not coincide with other public transport service timetables and routes.

Analysis/Indicator: If, for any reason, the private taxi company who provide Bendigo's taxi services were unable to operate, or were to close down the business, a significant proportion of Bendigo residents would be severely and adversely affected in being able to carry on with daily life.

Are there enough taxi ranks?

Opinion is almost equally divided; 30% said No while 28% said Yes. One participant commented that while they considered there were enough, they were not easily identifiable. Another said there were enough ranks in the CBD but that they have had to book a taxi from the rank. Others commented that there is a need for more ranks in safer areas near hospitals, shops, parks, that there can be long waits at weekends, and that there needs to be more taxis at night.

Does the present service meet your needs?

Almost two thirds of users reported that the service only met their needs sometimes (57 from 94 users). About a third reported that it always met their needs (30 from 94 users). One participant commented that in a city the size of Bendigo there was a need for more Maxi taxis.

Analysis/Indicators: The taxi service in Bendigo needs to review user patterns and provision of service to customers. Customers do not feel safe at taxi ranks.

Can you get a Maxi taxi on demand?

NB: The term "Maxi taxi" was deliberately used for two reasons. One, to identify whether people knew the difference between an ordinary taxi and a Maxi taxi (specifically designed to carry passengers in wheelchairs); and two, to identify their availability. Most participants ignored the term and commented on general taxi use.

This question was not answered by 45% of all participants and a further 19% selected Other. Of the remainder, opinion was divided equally between those who said Yes and those who said No (18%). Comments are also divided. One participant said yes, because they always booked while another thought the booking system service was unacceptable.

In general, participants indicated that they did not know what a Maxi taxi was or that it was different to an ordinary taxi. Anecdotal comments from students at La Trobe University indicate that when a group of five or six people ordered a taxi, Maxi taxis often arrived.

How far ahead must you book a Maxi Taxi to ensure that you get it?

Of the 65 participants who answered this question (45%), just over a third reported a wait of 30-45 minutes and over 20% reported waiting 1-3 hours. A disturbing 10% reported waiting 12-24 hours plus. One participant gets around this issue by having a permanent yearly booking.

Analysis/Indicator: There is an urgent need to review waiting times for taxis especially if the user has requested a Maxi taxi. More research from users who specifically use Maxi taxis is indicated.

Do you use Maxi Taxis at night or at weekends?

Of the 70 participants who answered this question, almost half said No, just over a third said Yes, and a quarter indicated Other. Of this last group, three said that they only did sometimes.

Are you satisfied with the Maxi Taxi service?

Of the 65 participants who responded to this question, 29 indicated being satisfied most of the time, 17 some of the time, 15 reported Other, and four responded that they were never satisfied with the service. Of the nine participants who made comments, three said the service was good and the drivers were courteous. The remainder commented they did not know, did not need the service, or never used it.

Can the taxi service in general be improved?

More than three quarters of participants who answered this question said Yes, and over 60% of these provided comments (NB: More than half of survey participants did not answer this question as they rarely used taxis or not at all).

Suggestions for improvement include:

- Return to a local booking service where call staff know the area.
- On call service between 5pm and 8am.
- More taxis at peak periods.
- More Maxi taxis.
- More Maxi taxis available on call.
- More taxis to be available in general.
- More taxi ranks in safer areas that are good lighting.
- Taxis to accept passenger groups with multiple destinations.
- Improved customer service from drivers.
- Improved arrival times after order placed.

SECTION 5: TRAIN SERVICES

How many times per week do you use a train?

Most participants reported that they used the train – only 6% never use the train and 5% did not answer the question. Usage patterns vary substantially. The majority (47%) use the train infrequently, only 1-2 times per year. The largest number in this category were from Eaglehawk. The remainder travel by train at least once a month (28%), with 14% travelling by train 1-5 times per week. The largest group of regular train users (weekly and monthly) were from La Trobe University.

Analysis/Indicators: Staff and students at La Trobe University use the train more than other participants who filled in this survey. This is most likely due to employment or study requirements.

Where do you normally go?

Although participants indicated that they travel to multiple locations, the main destination is Melbourne (83%), with a further 20% travelling to other Victorian destinations e.g. Castlemaine. Travel to Bendigo's CBD accounted for 13% with only 3% travelling to Bendigo suburbs. Few travel interstate (4%).

Analysis/Indicator: Melbourne is a major destination for travellers from Bendigo. As the largest group of regular train users is from La Trobe University, this may be linked to the need to commute for employment and/or study. More research of other large organisations and employment hubs in the Greater Bendigo area to determine usage patterns is indicated. This would assist in determining whether usage patterns by train users from La Trobe University are an anomaly specific to this region.

What do you use the train for?

Participants reported using the train to get to destinations for a variety of activities. The main reason is to visit family and friends (40%), followed by special events (36%) and shopping (23%). Getting to and from work, school, TAFE, and university comprised 20% of train travel, while 17% of users travelled by train to access sport, exercise, and other recreational activities. Participants commented that they also use the train for other reasons including volunteer work, business, going to the theatre in Melbourne, and getting home.

Do you use a mobility aid when travelling?

8% of participants answered Yes to this question. Mobility aids identified were wheelchair and cane.

Analysis/Indicator: This indicates there may be many more travellers using trains (and possibly other forms of public transport) with reduced mobility who do not identify themselves as being disabled. This indicates an opportunity for further research into types and numbers of mobility aids used by the travelling public in general. It also indicates an opportunity for research into how, when, and why people determine that they, or others, have a health condition that significantly impacts on their ability to manage daily living.

Are there enough train stops on the routes you use?

Even though 80% indicated Yes, some who thought there were too many stops. There were several interesting comments made by participants. These included the provision of a stop at Epsom in the future, and that residents of small towns should have easy access to trains and would use them if there were stops at more country towns.

Do you require assistance to get on and off the train?

Few participants reported that they needed assistance (4%) and four commented that they only required help sometimes for things like luggage, or when using a mobility aid.

What does it cost on average per journey?

For 37% of participants the cost is between \$20-40, 32% said it cost between \$10-20, and 16% said it cost them under \$10. A further 2% reported it cost between \$50-100. Two participants reported that they had free public transport.

Analysis/Indicators: If people are using the train once a week the cost per month could be up to \$160. This is very expensive for low income earners, students, and pensioners. For commuters using the train 3-5 times per week at a maximum cost of \$200 (5x \$40) this is almost as much as rent or mortgage payments. Travel expenses may lead to increased stress, increased social isolation, and a lack of community engagement, which will have a negative impact on health and wellbeing (Refer to WHO *Determinants of Social Health* on page 2 and local area statistics on page 8).

Does the timetable and route suit your needs?

Most users (74%) reported timetables and routes suited their needs, 5% reported Other and 12% did not answer the question. However, for a significant number of La Trobe University users (17%) and Centro Lansell users (9%), this was not the case.

The main issue relates to inconvenient and unsuitable timetables (especially evening peak periods, night services, and weekends), links to other services (especially Metro services), and other destinations within the state (e.g. Echuca, Swan Hill). Other issues identified by participants included a need for more services to and from Melbourne, and appropriate and timely links at Sunbury for passengers accessing public transport services to the airport.

How many children do you have that use the train to travel to school including schools for children with special needs?

4% of participants reported that their children used trains to get to school. No participants reported that they have children with special needs using the train.

Does the train service/s you use meet your needs?

65% of participants said the service mostly met their needs, 15% said only sometimes and 3% said it never met their needs. Participants commented that the train is not disability-friendly, others referred to overcrowding and being unable to get a seat. A particular concern for passengers travelling to and from Castlemaine is when they are not permitted to take their bicycles on the train.

Analysis/Indicators: V/Line's policy regarding wheelchair and bicycle access on trains should be reconsidered with a view to equitable outcomes for all train users. The provision of more carriages at peak periods may solve overcrowding, as well as problems experienced by users travelling with bicycles.

Are you satisfied with the train service you receive?

66% of participants were mostly satisfied but 15% were satisfied only sometimes and 3% were never satisfied. Difficulties arise when weather extremes (e.g. high temperatures) mean trains do not run and connecting bus services are also late.

Can the train service be improved?

Over half of participants reported Yes with a number of improvements suggested.

- **All** trains should be disability-friendly and allow easy access for users of wheelchairs and other mobility aids, including bicycles.
- Reduction of overcrowding so all passengers have a seat.
- Faster and more frequent services to and from Melbourne, including stops at Sunbury to access transport to airport.
- Increase number and visibility of conductors/guards on trains, especially at night.
- Increase number of night time services.
- More carriages at, and extension of, peak periods.
- Run on time.
- Timetables that link to other services.
- Improved communication regarding cancellations, delays, and alternate transportation being provided.
- More services that stop at Bendigo suburbs and country towns, including increased services to other state destinations such as Swan Hill.
- Snack bar facilities on all services.

SECTION 6: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

This section allowed people to make additional comments regarding public transport. The comments have been divided into headings for clarity.

General:

- Public transport is perceived to be unreliable and unsafe.
- Bad behaviour by passengers is a disincentive to using public transport.
- International students attending La Trobe University often have no other choice but to use public transport and would find concession fares helpful.

Access:

- In general, public transport services did not suit people with disabilities or those with health and mobility issues. Reasons included lack of appropriate and guaranteed seating, lack of safety, overcrowding, and no help to stow or secure mobility aids.
- All trains should cater for people with disabilities and not just some at selected times.
- Passengers with bicycles should be allowed access to all trains at all times.
- Consider providing stops at small country towns, e.g. St Arnaud, Mildura, Harcourt, Elphinstone, Taradale, Epsom, and Huntly.
- There is a need for more seating on trains.
- More bus stops in outer suburbs are required.

Customer Service:

- Buses need to stop when flagged down.
- Bus service to Epsom is good and the stop at supermarket is appreciated.
- Passengers want more personalised service and assistance to get on/off public transport, with luggage, and with mobility aids.
- Better designed bus shelters that are accessible for all users and weather-proof.

Timetables:

- Timetables on all public transport services need to accommodate user requirements.
- Buses need to consider the time it takes for passengers to board and disembark when determining timetables, and allow extra time at peak periods.
- Buses need to run to advertised timetables and not leave earlier than time stated on timetables.
- It would be helpful to have a means to track whether the bus has already passed the stop so that passengers can make other arrangements if they have missed the bus.
- Buses need to ensure their timetables connect with train services.

SECTION 7: REASONS FOR NOT USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

There were a variety of reasons why people choose not to use public transport.

- Participants with disabilities commented that public transport services are unreliable and do not meet disability and/or educational needs. For instance, no assistance is generally available when accessing public transport unless a family member, friend, or carer accompanies traveller.
- Participants stated that public transport doesn't meet the needs of individuals and families. For example, when children need to be dropped off at, and collected from, after-school and weekend activities especially sport.
- Participants commented that disincentives to using public transport included bad passenger behaviour, extensive waiting times for taxis when ordered on demand, its unreliability, is too expensive, and that public transport, in general, is time-expensive.
- Participants use own transport because it suits their needs, personal timetables, is easier, and when there is no other option i.e. the person lives out of town and public transport services are poor or non-existent. They also report choosing to help the environment by walking or using other forms of transport such as bikes.
- Participants commented that they would use public transport more often if it were more accessible, convenient, and available.

FINDINGS

- Transport issues raised by those who made submissions at our public forum on 24 June 2010 have been confirmed by this survey.
- The present public transport system in Bendigo is ineffective and inefficient in a number of areas: timeliness, suitable links to other public transport, and access.
- Regular users of public transport services in Bendigo report considerable dissatisfaction with present services.
- The present services available to public transport users are inequitable for certain sectors of the Bendigo community – namely students, low income earners, and people living with mobility problems and/or disabilities.
- The present services available to public transport users do not serve the needs of outlying areas where residents commute to Bendigo for employment and/or education.
- Most infrequent users of public transport tend to plan their trips and so fit in with existing routes and timetables.
- After-hours, weekend, and public holiday transport services (especially bus services) are, in general, totally inadequate.
- Students need to travel at times well after the last bus leaves the university for the CBD at 7pm (Route 11, 14). It appears local authorities do not understand that the university operates seven days a week and on public holidays during semester. It has a large number of students living in campus residences and close to the university who are reliant on public transport. These students cannot make full use of the university library, which does not close until 9pm on week nights, because of unsuitable bus services.
- For people with disabilities, mobility issues, or those who do not drive and cannot afford a car, there is little choice other than to use taxis when shopping.
- There are areas that require more detailed and targeted research. These include the issues and concerns faced by people with disabilities when accessing all forms of public transport to and from, and in and around, Bendigo; the viability of alternative transport options such as mini-buses and/or community buses; consideration of a free public transport to service major hubs in the CBD e.g. Hargreaves Mall, The Marketplace, View Street Arts precinct, Dragon Museum and TAFE; what proportion of the weekly budget relates to transport costs.
- Travellers who use wheelchairs and/or scooters cannot access any train they wish as only certain trains cater for their needs.
- Travellers who wish to travel with bicycles are not guaranteed access to train services. This is especially inequitable as often the choice to use a bicycle is dictated by unsuitable and timely links to other public transport.
- As demonstrated by the amount of use Kangaroo Flat train station has experienced since its reopening, if more services were provided to the residents of Bendigo, more use of public transport is likely.
- Taxi services in Bendigo are provided by a privately-owned service. If, for any reason, the company were unable to provide taxi services or close their business, a significant portion of Bendigo residents would be severely and adversely affected in their abilities to participate in normal daily activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That public transport service providers in Bendigo take immediate action and overhaul their services.
2. That the relevant authorities responsible for bus and train services develop and implement a strategy that ensures suitable and timely links with each service. In particular, bus timetables must coincide with arrival and departure times of trains to and from Melbourne at peak periods.
3. That the relevant authorities ensure that a strategy plan is in place which responds in a timely and appropriate manner to changes in V/Line and metropolitan train timetables that affect passengers travelling to and from Bendigo.
4. It is essential that the relevant authorities responsible for bus and train services develop and implement strategies to serve present needs, and consult regularly as to the future needs of local tertiary education institutions.
5. That the relevant authorities, including the City of Greater Bendigo Council address the issues of equitable access to all forms of public transport to and from, in and around, and across the city as a matter of urgency.
6. That all relevant authorities actively seek and regularly consult with frequent users of each type of public service to fully comprehend the issues.
7. That bus service companies consider using smaller vehicles and provide more frequent services to all Bendigo suburbs with particular consideration to users travelling to and from tertiary institutions.
8. That all trains at peak periods make provision for commuters using bicycles.
9. That more trains cater for users with mobility aids, especially wheelchair and scooter users.
10. That access to bus shelters is upgraded to be inclusive of all members of the community. This can be achieved by extending the canopy to cater for more people and inclement weather. The concrete flooring should be kept to a standard that prevents users from falling and tripping.
11. Due to the increased numbers of students from schools, TAFE, and university it is recommended that the bus service either lets students use the Strathfieldsaye bus (Route 16) or during semesters and school terms provides a mini bus service at peak times to transport passengers between the train station and La Trobe University.
12. Due to the large population of students living in and around the university (500 plus in campus residences), an increase in bus services on weekends and on week nights to at least 9.30pm is suggested.
13. That all buses carry up-to-date timetables and details of each route so that passengers (especially visitors to Bendigo) have a clear understanding of how to use the bus system.
14. Suggestions for areas of research:
 - a. Experiences of people with disabilities when accessing all forms of public transport to and from, and in and around, Bendigo and reluctance to use public transport as a result.
 - b. The viability of alternative transport options such as mini-buses and/or community buses.
 - c. Consideration of a free public transport to service major hubs within the CBD e.g. Hargreaves Mall, The Marketplace, View St Arts precinct, and Dragon Museum.
 - d. What proportion of the weekly budget relates to transport costs and to what degree this may be causing financial stress.
 - e. What incentives are necessary to increase public transport usage?

- f. What would be the impact on Bendigo if there was no taxi service?
- g. Of the major employers in the area, how many require their employees to travel outside the area for business or training? How many of those employees use the train and why?
- h. What kinds of public transport services do other cities in Australia and around the world with similar demographics to Bendigo have? Do they have working solutions that may be appropriate to adopt in Bendigo?

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