

# **What, Where, When and How - but mostly when**

## **Information and Public Transport**

**Passenger Transport Board Executive Director Heather Webster**

**People for Public Transport Forum  
Public Transport in Adelaide: Problems and Visions  
Unley Citizens Centre - 13 Arthur Street, UNLEY  
Saturday 14 August (1 1.05 - 11.25 a.m.)**

120,000 people are carried on Adelaide's public transport system each day. Essentially this means that public transport affects most families, most days. Even those who don't use public transport want a good system partly for civic pride, mainly because they have a mother, child or relation who uses it - and often depends on it.

Public transport is important to the functioning of every city. It is essential for students, business, shoppers, workers and tourists. Public transport makes the city work. Without successful public transport, the city is unable to deliver special (such as the Sensational 500, Skyshow (106,900 people), events at Football Park etc).

Public transport is safe - the more people on public transport the fewer accidents (38,000 people didn't drink and drive on New Year's Eve but used public transport) Fewer accidents means savings for hospitals, lower insurance costs, less social and individual trauma.

More people on public transport means less road congestion and lower investment needs for new roads, lower business costs and more efficient use of everyone's time and less pollution.

### **Patronage**

#### **What we have done ?**

- Research;
- Looked at systems which work around the world;
- Established a patronage working group with contractors, (including operators); Consulted marketing professionals - established a marketing plan.

#### **Identified the key factors which (together) make a difference**

- Services - service changes;
- Pricing - fare structure, options;
- Marketing and information - marketing plan;
- Planning - contract areas;
- Service coordination - feeders etc.

Earlier this morning Minister Brindal said that a key strategy to attract people back to public transport was the introduction of the Passenger Transport Board's contracts - these have delivered improved services.

Information is another major key to encouraging people to use public transport. We need to make it easier to use and understand.

*What, Where, When and How* are the most basic information people need before they can travel.

An evolutionary change in the provision of public transport has been taking place in the past few years. It's a part of broader evolution taking place right across our community - and right across the global community.

Bus stop info units, the infoline, the InfoCentre, info staff, internet sites, info brochures, info buses - (such as the CityFree services and the Serco Zebra services) - Customer Briefings, MetroGuides and StateGuides are all a part of this revolution.

People need - and people should receive comprehensive, accessible and easy to understand information about public transport. Producing and providing this information in a reliable and consistent package has been complex.

More than 60 per cent of the callers to our Infoline ask for "next departure" information.

To make a successful public transport journey a customer needs specific information at various stages of their journey. They need to know:

What sort of ticket to buy; then

Where to board a vehicle; then

When is the service running, then

How to validate their ticket, then

Where to get off.

Each link is essential to a successful journey and customers need clear information about each link.

The Passenger Transport Board and public transport operators have been working hard to provide an integrated package of time table and other information to the community.

## **Information Units**

Twenty five large information units have been installed across metropolitan Adelaide at interchanges and key bus stops including Colonnades Shopping Centre, Noarlunga Interchange, Tea Tree Plaza Interchange - Modbury, Paradise, Blackwood, Klemzig, the City, Marion and the Flinders Medical Centre. Another 21 units are planned for the rest of the metropolitan area.

The design of the units won an achievement award from the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commission. People with disabilities helped ensure the units met the needs of all public transport customers, including people with vision impairments and other disabilities.

The units are two metres tall, back-lit and have large graphics to make them easy to read. They also feature:

- timetable and route information ,for bus and train services;
- a map of metropolitan public transport routes;
- push-button recorded information, and
- braille and engraved signs.

In a survey of over 800 people the majority agreed the Units would encourage them to use public transport.

## **Information Units in the Inner Southern suburbs**

In the southeast of Adelaide from Greenhill Road to Reynella small and medium sized information units are being installed at over one-third of all bus stops. This represents the biggest installation of bus stop information in Adelaide since the early 1980s.

The units, to be installed at 225 bus stops, feature easy to read timetables and colour-coded route maps.

We hope to extend bus stop information units across the whole metropolitan area. There are more than 7,000 bus stops across Adelaide, so this is no small task.

Throughout this trial we'll be monitoring customer feedback and the cost of maintaining the information units. We encourage the local community and public transport users to offer feedback and reporting any need for repairs to the InfoLine.

## **MetroGuide**

Getting around Adelaide has been made a lot easier with the free MetroGuide to Adelaide's bus, train and tram services.

The MetroGuide contains:

- every bus, train and tram stop in Adelaide;
- maps of the City centre and major interchanges;
- key taxi ranks in the City;
- colour coding to match route information to maps at the InfoCentre and on bus stop information units;
- information about using the Metroticket ticketing system: and
- tips for tourists.

## **StateGuide and Country bus information units**

Two of the most significant improvements to ever happen to public transport information in regional South Australia are the StateGuide and the country bus stop information units.

More than a million journeys are made on South Australia's country bus services every year.

Country bus services run to and from the Barossa, Eyre Peninsula and the Flinders Ranges, the Fleurieu Peninsula, Mannum, the Adelaide Hills, Aldinga, the Mid North, Murray Bridge, the North East, the Riverland, the South East and Yorke Peninsula.

Bus stop information units have now been installed at over one third of South Australia's country bus stops. Small or medium-sized info units have been installed at 129 of the 300 country bus stops around the State.

And we now have the first ever comprehensive guide to South Australia's country bus services.

The StateGuide was developed by the Passenger Transport Board from an idea proposed by the bus industry.

In an easy-to-read, colourful format the StateGuide includes:

- timetables for all of South Australia's country bus services;
- contact details for regional city taxi and bus services; and
- contact details for community passenger networks.

The StateGuide and the country bus stop info units are a leap forward for Country Bus Services. They make using public transport much easier for people living in the country and for anyone travelling around the State -including tourists - particularly backpackers.

The Bus and Coach Association says the units and the StateGuide will help make country bus services much easier to understand and will encourage more South Australians and visitors to our State to use the regional bus network.

The StateGuide is available from 122 outlets, including bus depots and ticket outlets in the country, regional tourism offices, and from Tourism SA, the Franklin Street Bus Depot and the Passenger Transport InfoCentre in Adelaide.

Country callers can also order a copy of the StateGuide, free of charge, by calling a toll free number (1800 182 160).

## **Infoline**

The Passenger Transport InfoLine is the one stop shop for getting advice over the phone about planning a journey, timetables or buying a ticket. It also acts as a central point for feedback about the services being provided by all operators.

The InfoLine staff takes over 500,000 calls a year.

## **Infocentre**

The InfoCentre on the corner of King William and Currie streets provides information, advice and Metrotickets to more than 500,000 customers a year.

Improvements to the Centre include:

- a 50 per cent enlargement to handle the growing number of people who want information about public transport;
- lower counters and the removal of glass partitions to allow closer contact with customer service staff;
- chairs for people wanting to sit down to study timetables (important for aged or frail people or for customers with young children.);
- large, easy to read back lit maps of Adelaide's public transport system to help customers identify their routes;
- large, back lit maps facing the street so customers can check their routes after the InfoCentre is closed;

- express "ticket only" lanes during times of high demand;
- new timetable displays that make timetables easier to find; and
- less queuing as customers can help themselves to a lot of the information they need.

The InfoCentre is open from 8 a.m. to 6 pm. Monday to Saturday and supplies customers with more than 20,000 timetables each week.

## **Timetables**

Timetables need to be, if nothing else, un-der-stand-able! There is nothing worse for a would-be traveller than to make the effort to get hold of a bus, train or tram timetable, only to find a mass of figures that makes no apparent sense!

If a person had a car it would be a very easy decision to give up on public transport there and then and use the car instead. If you don't have access to a car - and a very large number of people who use public transport don't have access to a car then a badly designed timetable is a nightmare.

The Passenger Transport Board has been working with metropolitan transport operators to improve the design of timetables as you may have seen in the change in design of the Serco timetable format.

## **Vision for the future**

Customers have indicated that quick access to accurate departure times for individual services for bus, rail and tram services does influence their use of public transport.

Automated Telephone Systems are now coming on to the market to enable customers to ring from the comfort of their home to check on departure times for their next two or three services from their local stop or station.

With these systems customers are able to obtain the information in less than 30 seconds, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Customers are also able to talk to an operator if they wish.

Automated Telephone Systems are particularly useful for off peak services where the service frequency may be wider apart than peak hours.

The World Wide Web is increasingly becoming available to the community, Recent University of South Australia research suggests that 45 per cent of the population has access to the Internet at Home or Work.

The connection rate to the Web is increasing at a rapid rate.

An easy-to-use, customer-friendly, internet-based journey planner could, be available to customers at home, at work, from public libraries and internet cafes, 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

A customer would need to key in their home address and the destination.

A range of up to five options would be presented, with details of where to catch the bus, at what time, what route the bus would be showing provided.

The customer would be able to take a copy of the travel times, etc. and also a map and an abbreviated timetable with them on the journey.

## Conclusion

Good quality, readily accessible information is essential to making public transport an easy alternative to the private car. In a culture where car use is easy and cheap, public transport faces an ongoing challenge to retain its customer base. I am committed not only to retaining customers - but to increasing patronage.

Information represents one of the most important ways to ensure the success of public transport.

We live in an information and communications rich age and the means of delivering information to the public is becoming increasingly diverse and easy.

This is presenting exciting possibilities for public transport information services in the form of, for example, the Internet, electronic kiosks, real-time bus stop displays and suburban satellite information centres.

The bottom line, however, is that the community needs comprehensive route and timetable information to be readily and widely available. This information needs to be easily understood to reassure both the novice and the experienced public transport user.

What's more we need information from you... the people who use public transport. We need as much feedback as possible. We need to hear about the pluses and we need to hear about the negatives. We need your praise when we get things right and details when we get things wrong. Most of all we need your suggestions about we can better meet your travel needs.

The Passenger Transport Board InfoLine 8210 1000 is as useful for getting information to us as it is for getting information about public transport.

The Passenger Transport Users' Committee is another great way to pass your ideas and suggestions for change onto the Board.

South Australia's public transport system *is* being transformed with a focus on easy to use information and services in an effort to meet the travel needs of as many people as possible.

Whether you are a seasoned commuter, a first-time traveller or a visitor to South Australia, the integrated package of information being developed by the Passenger Transport Board and the operators will help you make the most of South Australia's public transport system.

We will continue to provide high quality public transport information to you and I sincerely hope that you'll continue to provide high quality feedback to us. This will mean we can all continue to develop responsive, improved and innovative services for South Australia into the new Millennium.