

6. A Proposal for a New National Capital Transit System

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6. A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW NATIONAL CAPITAL TRANSIT SYSTEM

This Chapter will review the material presented in the project and confirm that a market for a new transit system exists. It will focus on serving those market segments identified (visitors and commuters) and present a strategy for implementing an enhanced transit system based on the key principles of high quality service, affordable infrastructure (based initially on using existing ACTION resources and expertise), best practice passenger information systems and a strong and sound management regime.

6.1 PROJECT FINDINGS

In summary the project has found:

- That existing public transport services in Central Canberra are inadequate and poorly targeted. There is currently no attempt to build a network effect where all services and modes integrate to form a well planned and holistic approach to the mobility needs of the city. Public sector services have been scaled back to such an extent that many key attractions are now inaccessible by public transport. Similarly, the private sector operators have lacked stability and those currently in operation tend to be infrequent and unaffordable.
- The situation has been compounded by a lack of strategic transport planning which has not championed the need to maintain public access for all. Of particular relevance has been the void of policy guidance - particularly in the Central National Area - and the jurisdictional consequences which result from a city with dual planning and regulatory systems. All the existing planning policies, including the recent Parliamentary Zone Review, are primarily geared towards maintaining the private car as the main means of mobility - they are essentially silent on the practical measures required to bring about public transport reforms and innovation.
- While there is clear policy guidance at both the National and Territory levels in respect to Ecologically Sustainable Development and measures to reduce Greenhouse gas emissions, initiating significant change through greater support for public transport has not been a priority for government.
- The project has identified two main markets for transit - visitors and commuters. Each would be complementary rather than competitive.
- Following a review of the literature, the essential elements for successful public transport systems can be summarised as high quality service (including frequency); attractive infrastructure (not necessarily high technology); well communicated passenger information; and sound management.
- A number of model transit services from around Australia were reviewed and the lessons they teach reviewed in the context of the Canberra access problem. The CAT service in Perth is the arguably the finest example of best practice urban transit in Australia. However, all the models reviewed provided important lessons ranging from the need for market research; labour relations; promotions and marketing, etc. The Explorer services in Sydney, with their strong brand identity and sophisticated marketing practices were also a useful example of best-practice niche tourist operations. The recent trials of services in Canberra were also useful in determining what might be successful in the Canberra market.

6.2 PLANNING FOR BETTER ACCESS - A NEW TRANSIT SERVICE FOR CANBERRA

It is now appropriate to plan a new system which will tailor a service for Canberra's particular needs.

To compete successfully in the Canberra market, the proposed transit service must have its own identity. 'Capital Transit' is the name that has been coined to convey both a sense a place and function. It is a simple yet powerful 'brand' name which could be promoted heavily to strongly reinforce its role and differentiate its position in the Canberra travel market.

The new service would complement rather than compete with existing operators including ACTION and the private coach companies. Indeed, the effect of a new entrant into the Canberra transport market is likely to cause the market as a whole to grow in a manner similar to the effect that new airlines are currently having in the domestic aviation market. In general terms market innovation brings competitiveness which raises standards and lowers costs. Promotion of new services by new operators helps to raise community awareness which in turn creates greater demand.

ACTION will stand to benefit significantly as passengers, particularly commuters, attracted to using Capital Transit services will need to interchange with ACTION to access the wider metropolitan network.

It is envisaged that with the co-operation and goodwill of ACTION (with the approval of the ACT Government) a commercial arrangement could be entered into for it to supply the Capital Transit service for a trial period of say three years. To ensure that the high quality service requirements of Capital Transit are provided, ACTION would be contracted on the basis that it meet strict performance criteria and be subject to regular review.

Although heavily rationalised over recent years, ACTION remains well placed to provide Capital Transit with the necessary infrastructure (particularly with its fleet of midi-buses); trained labour; and technical support resources to initiate operations under contract.

The key advantage of utilising ACTION is its operational capacity and its 'home town' expertise which could be used to help establish services relatively quickly. As Capital Transit would rely heavily on attracting patronage through the 'network effect' - integrating its services with those of ACTION as the incumbent operator, it would be logical and desirable to work as a partnership from the system's inception. However, if for any reason ACTION failed to deliver the quality of service specified, alternative operators could be sought immediately through open tender. Towards the end of the trial period it would be desirable to undertake a market test of the service provided by ACTION to ensure best practice and cost effectiveness was being maintained.

The proposed system has 3 key elements:

- dedicated buses for the service (but which offer the flexibility to be utilised within the rest of the metropolitan transport network);
- a new route and transit stops;
- a new sophisticated passenger information system

Objectives

In planning for enhanced accessibility within Central National Area (CNA), Capital Transit will have the following objectives:

- Strengthening the linkages to and *within* the CNA, particularly in the Parliamentary Zone (the *Place of the People*) and, importantly, *integration* of the system with the City Centre, the ferry services on Lake Burley Griffin and the metropolitan wide ACTION bus network.
- Demonstration of the attractiveness and efficiency of a high quality, frequent, user-friendly, bus transit system as a viable alternative to the car.
- Implementation of a transport system which makes a significant contribution to achieving enhanced environmental outcomes, particularly meeting reduced greenhouse gas targets.
- Maximising inter-governmental cooperation and efficiency through the establishment of a collaborative management model which will be representative of all stakeholders - particularly the Commonwealth and Territory Governments; the service providers; the key user groups; as well as the wider community.
- To be part of an innovative, financially sustainable, multi-modal transport system for the National Capital, which serves as a fitting best practice model for the nation (as well as internationally).

Service

Capital Transit will offer a new, high quality service which will supplement the existing operations offered by the public sector provider (ACTION) and the private sector firms which target the tourist market. To function efficiently it must integrate with ACTION services, particularly at points of transfer in and around the Central National Area.

The Proposed Capital Transit Route

The route put forward is a fixed route with a Monday to Friday only extension through Barton to serve the area's major employment precinct. The route is intended to be easily identifiable and legible for both visitors and commuters.

The route identified (see Figure 6.1) will provide a direct link between the major transport hub in the City centre (Civic Interchange) and the major Institutions and attractions located in the Central National Area.

The route is designed to include the newly refurbished National Capital Exhibition at Regatta Point and travel directly through the Parliamentary Zone (PZ) to Canberra's most popular site - Parliament House. En route it will serve a major new transfer point in Commonwealth Avenue (to connect with the many inter-town express and other services using this corridor as well as attracting patronage from the nearby Hyatt Hotel and Treasury Building). It will then turn into the PZ to stop at Old Parliament House; and then Parliament House (serving the main public entrance via the covered lower level area).

From Parliament House it will proceed through Barton (Monday to Fridays only) via State Circle, Brisbane Avenue and National Circuit (with stops to serve this major employment precinct). It would then turn into Kings Avenue with a stop to serve a second major transfer point (to connect with peak express and other services which use this corridor to access the city via Russell). Heading back into the PZ it will serve the John Gorton Offices; then the National Gallery of Australia, High Court and travel west along the Lake foreshore past the proposed Commonwealth Place development. It will then stop at the National Library,

the National Science and Technology Centre and Treasury Building before returning to the City via Regatta Point.

To expedite commuter travel at peak times, services would not stop at Regatta Point before 9 am or after 5 pm. The loop through Barton may not be necessary to operate on weekends and holidays (subject to trial and further consultation).

Initially, a single direction circuit is proposed, however, a counter-directional service may be warranted as patronage grows.

Links with the ACTION Network

To facilitate what Mees (2000) described as the 'network effect', passenger transfers between ACTION services and Capital Transit will be encouraged. To do this will help to build the market for transit in Canberra as a whole. The major focus for the partnership will be the Civic Bus Interchange where the Capital Transit circuit will commence and terminate. Secondary transfer facilities would be located at the Commonwealth Avenue and Kings Avenue stops. These two corridors cater for virtually all north-south ACTION services, so it is vital that passengers be given the opportunity to transfer at these stops. Where appropriate other ACTION services operating through the PZ will stop at Capital Transit stops. Other opportunities to link with ACTION services and build patronage should be further investigated. These may include links to the Australian War Memorial via Anzac Parade and the new National Museum of Australia which has already demonstrated a large potential transit market due to limited supply of car parking.

Frequency and Hours of Operation

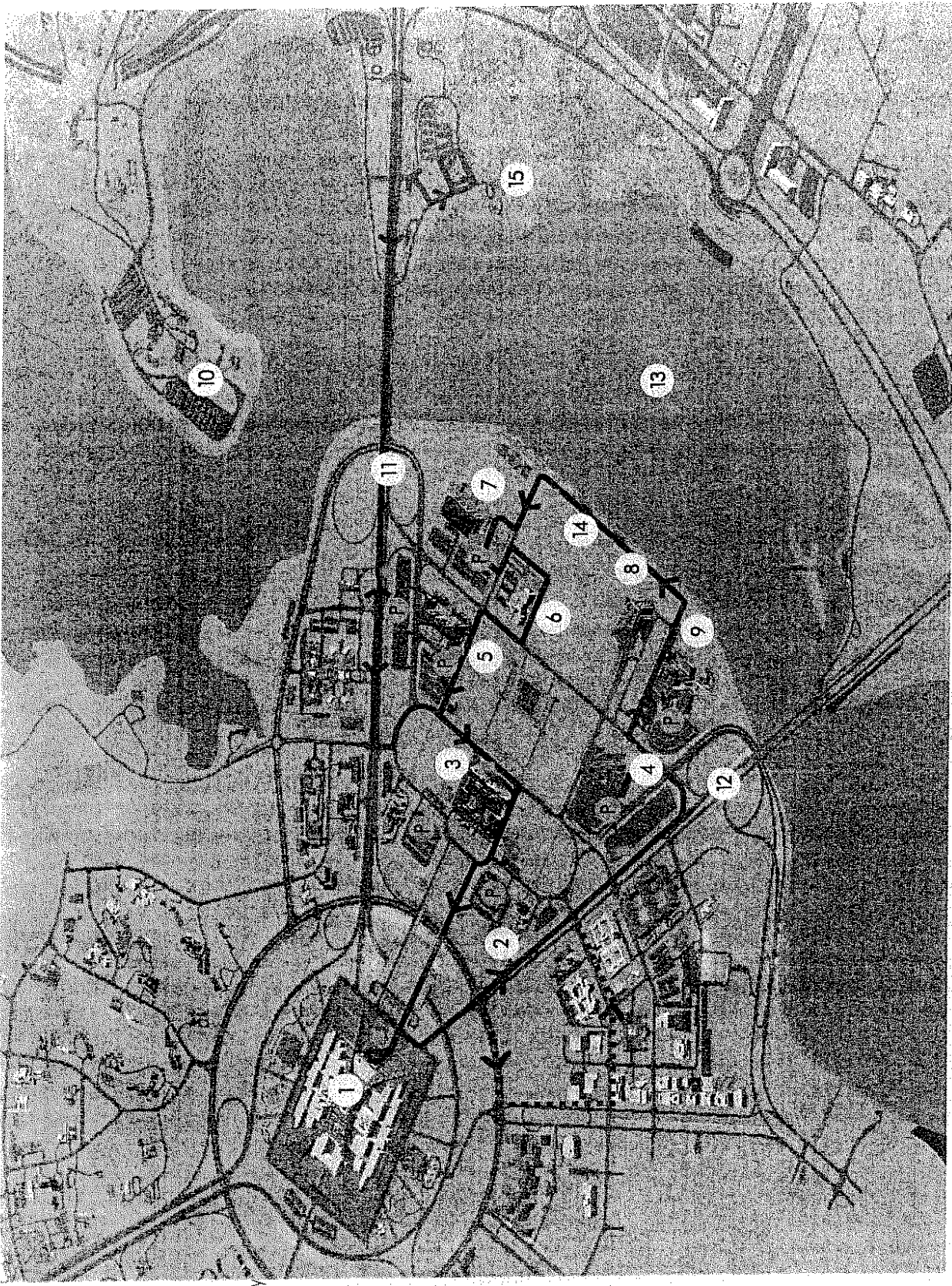
On weekdays, a basic 10 minute frequency is proposed. It would commence at 7am and finish at 7pm. As patronage grows, supplementary services during the peak periods would allow for a 5 minute frequency at certain times - for example during the morning and evening peak periods and possibly at lunch time to cater for workers wishing to travel to Civic or the Lake as well those in Civic wanting to enjoy the PZ's attractions.

Ideally the frequency on weekends and holidays would remain at 10 minute intervals but hours of operation may be adjusted to reflect the lower demand. In the absence of a commuter market on these days, the main source of patronage is visitors to the PZ and its attractions. As the opening hours for the attractions tend to be within the 9 am to 5 pm range, hours of operation would be 9 am to 5.30 pm - and later if required during summer and special events such as concerts or rallies. The service would need to be flexible enough to be able to respond to major peak demands and provide larger buses (including ACTION's under-utilised articulated bus fleet) when required.

At night patrons may use existing ACTION route services (with some supplementation) through the precinct and these should form a clearly integrated extension of the Capital Transit service outside its normal hours of operation.

As the Barton loop is unlikely to be required on weekends and holidays, the time savings would assist to maintain the basic 10 minute schedule over the rest of the circuit.

There are significant advantages in maintaining a 10 minute schedule - it avoids the necessity to run to a published timetable. While drivers would need to maintain a schedule based on timing points to ensure the appropriate spacing between services, the user of the service would only need to be assured that there would be service within 10 minutes no matter when they arrive at a stop.



- 1 Parliament House
- 2 National Archives Building
- 3 Old Parliament House
- 4 John Gorton Building
- 5 Treasury Building
- 6 National Science & Technology Centre
- 7 National Library of Australia
- 8 High Court of Australia
- 9 National Gallery of Australia
- 10 National Museum of Australia
- 11 Commonwealth Avenue
- 12 Kings Avenue
- 13 Lake Burley Griffin
- 14 Commonwealth Place
- 15 National Capital Exhibition
- P Major Carpark

Proposed Transit Route

Mon-Fri only (thru Barton)

Proposed Locations of Transit Stops

CENTRAL NATIONAL AREA, CANBERRA - PROPOSED CAPITAL TRANSIT ROUTE



Figure 6.1 - Proposed 'National Transit Route'
Source: Author (2001)

Staffing

Drawing on the experience of the Perth CAT service, Capital Transit staff must be capable of presenting a highly professional image in which they perform more than bus driving duties - they become 'ambassadors' for both Capital Transit as well as the functions and attractions of the National Capital.

Staff would need to be selected on the basis of a range of skills. They would need to exhibit a strong service ethic and be required to undertake specialised training in communications and passenger relations. Those with knowledge of and enthusiasm for the National Capital's history, attractions and affairs would be ideal.

In recognition of the importance of presenting a contemporary and cosmopolitan image, a diverse, gender-balanced, multi-cultural and multi-lingual workforce would be sought.

Fares and tickets

Ideally Capital Transit would be free for all passengers. If, however, some cost recovery measures are required they should be kept to a minimum and as simple as possible (eg a single gold coin). Ticket price structures need to be easy to understand; family and group friendly; and encourage multi-ride options. Most importantly, they should facilitate transfers between ACTION and Capital Transit services.

A ticket would generally be valid for the entire day (with multi-day options) on Capital Transit services and the holder encouraged to maximise their travel value. Passengers would be encouraged to purchase tickets prior to boarding the service with tickets available from a wide range of outlets including ACTION; newsagents; the National Institutions and attractions - with incentives offered to pre-purchase. Use of 'smart card' and other emerging payment technologies should also be explored.

Appropriate use of technology for ticketing can have significant impacts on operational costs. Sydney Buses estimates that through its use of sophisticated ticketing it takes only 40 per cent of the time to load its passengers compared to other operators using manual systems with heavy dependence on cash handling. It also reduces security risks and enhances the amount and speed of information available about passenger trips. (Adam, 2000)

It may be possible to subsidise fares by accessing funds from government initiatives such as the Greenhouse Abatement Programs; National Capital awareness programs; or direct financial assistance from the attractions. Passengers may be rewarded through incentives such as 'free transfer to Capital Transit' if you have paid to travel on ACTION route services for part of your journey. Wherever practical, travel on Capital Transit could be included as part of travel packages for visitors. The commuter market may also be encouraged through discounted periodical tickets and other incentives.

Infrastructure

Buses

In accordance with the high standards sought, the vehicles used would need to be attractive, accessible and well suited to the task. ACTION's existing fleet of midi-buses would be ideal because of their efficient size (with seating for about 25 people), manoeuvrability and suitability for people with disabilities. For minimal outlays the midis could be modified to provide air conditioning (desirable to maximise passenger comfort) and on-board communications equipment.

Figure 6.2 shows how an ACTION midibus might appear as a Capital Transit bus.

Figure 6.2 Capital Transit bus (impression)



Source: Author (2001)

With some restructuring of ACTION rosters some midi-buses could be made available for use on the Capital Transit service. It is estimated that the route would require a minimum of 3 buses to provide the 10 minute frequency (based on a short duration stopping model with most tickets purchased prior to boarding). During peak times the number of buses would increase to 6 meet additional demand and overcome delays due to traffic congestion (primarily in and around Civic). In this respect some thought may have to be given to introducing bus priority measures such as transit lanes and clearways to ensure good timekeeping.

The use of midi buses would be a reasonable balance between full size vehicles such as those operated by the Explorer services in Sydney and the smaller capacity buses used on Nepean Nippers and Brisbane's Hail and Ride. While the stylish imported CAT buses would be highly desirable, the capital costs would be prohibitive.

The midi buses should be provided with new liveries to assist to identify their new roles but retain all existing features (including ticket validation equipment) which enable their continued use by ACTION when not required for Capital Transit duties. Larger buses in the ACTION fleet could be made available to supplement the midis at times of peak loadings or large crowd moving operations.

To enhance their environmental performance, it may be possible to convert the buses from diesel to LPG fuel with assistance from the Commonwealth Government's Greenhouse Abatement Program (Australian Greenhouse Office, 2000) which is currently providing Sydney Buses with 50 per cent rebates for the cost of conversion which is around \$15,000 to \$20,000 per bus. (Adam, 2000)

In the longer term, consideration may be given to purchasing buses which are purpose designed and offer more advanced technologies or use alternative fuel sources such as compressed natural gas (CNG); electric batteries or hydrogen fuel cells. (see examples at Figures 6.3, 6.4, 6.5)

Figure 6.3 Hybrid electric-diesel bus - Christchurch, NZ (1999)



Source : Transit Australia (1999) p 179

Figure 6.4 Battery electric bus - Oxford, UK (1994)



Source: Transit Australia (1995) p 3

Figure 6.5 Hydrogen fuel cell bus – being trialled in Perth



Source: Transit Australia (2000) p 107

Bus stops

One of the most significant areas of infrastructure need relates to bus stops. The existing signage and shelters are generally inappropriate for the high quality service envisaged. The introduction of Capital Transit provides the ideal opportunity to develop an architectural and design style that befits the heritage listed precincts through which the service will operate. As the key agency responsible for the Central National Area, the National Capital Authority should play an important role in developing design criteria but perhaps also in assisting to fund these important community assets.

“Well designed and maintained bus stops and related facilities can enhance the perception and attractiveness of a bus service, even to current non-users.” (State Transit Authority of NSW, 1999a, p 30)

To be attractive as a point for waiting for a bus, the bus stop must be comfortable, clean, offer seating, weather protection and clear sight lines of approaching buses. It must be easily recognisable as the point to wait for Capital Transit services (system legibility) and be safe to approach, wait and leave. It will provide orientation material including a locality map (eg ‘you are here’), and comprehensive information about the bus services offered from the stop.

In summary, the new bus stops must satisfy the following design criteria:

- Distinctive, stylish, functional, consistent and immediately identifiable as Capital Transit ‘icons’ (but not to the exclusion of other operators such as ACTION);
- Take into account the safety and capacity requirements for buses, passengers, and passing pedestrians; as well as any traffic and parking impacts;
- Display appropriate system information in a functional and attractive manner;
- Modular design for easy relocation; expansion or replacement;
- Designed in a manner which is aesthetically pleasing and befitting of locations of national significance;
- Be well located for pedestrians, particularly for those with mobility impairments, and within close proximity to the public entry points of the places they serve; and
- Contribute to both the system as well as the precinct by naming of individual stops.

Figures 6.6 and 6.7 shown examples of simple bus stop designs in plan and section formats respectively. Figure 6.8 shows an example of a larger more stylish shelter design currently used at an unattended rail station in Adelaide. While Figure 6.9 illustrates the potential that a heritage style could offer

Passenger Information

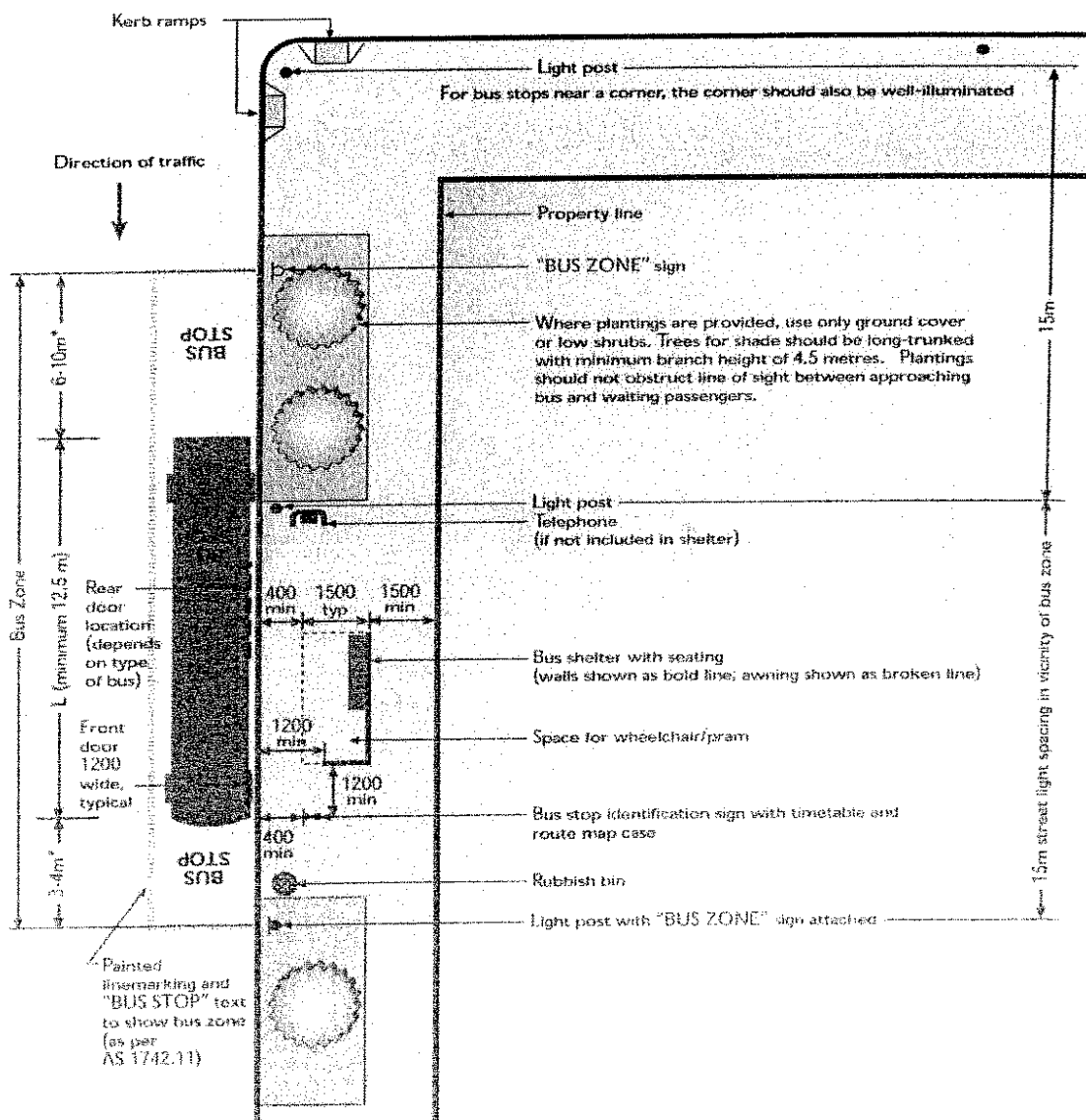
Capital Transit passenger information should be fully integrated with the buses and the bus stops. The system should provide:

- On-vehicle route and service information;
- On-vehicle ‘current stop’ and ‘next stop’ visual displays and audio announcements;
- Bus stop route and service information (with potential for later introduction of real time visual displays and audio announcements). Advice about where to obtain further information or to seek help via telephone, internet, etc should also be clearly displayed. An example of a very comprehensive information stand developed in Adelaide is shown at Figure 6.10.

- Bus stops shared with ACTION or other operators that use the stop need to clearly differentiate between services provided by each operator and provide helpful information about their services.
- Promotional material designed to increase awareness amongst all groups of potential users. Material should be widely available throughout Canberra but particularly prominent within the Capital Transit's operational area. Material should be readily available from tourist information centres; tourist attractions; tourist accommodation, shopping centres; key restaurants and clubs etc; ACTION kiosks; newsagents; nearby workplaces; etc.

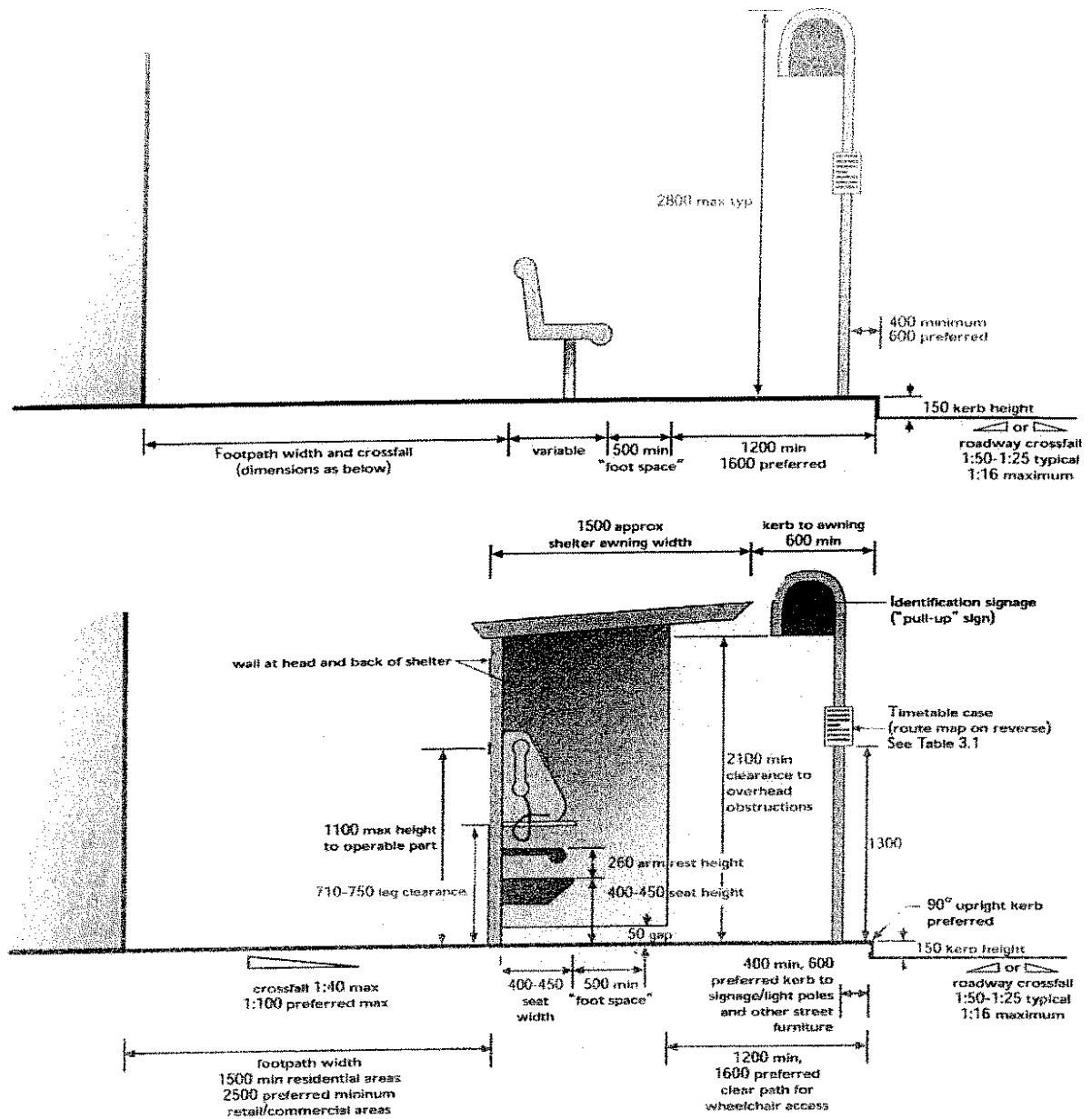
The provision of real time GPS based information such as that incorporated into the Perth CAT system would be ideal as it has great appeal as a marketing tool. However, such technologies are not essential to establish the system.

Figure 6.6 - Bus stop example design (plan)



Source: State Transit Authority of NSW (1999a) p 20

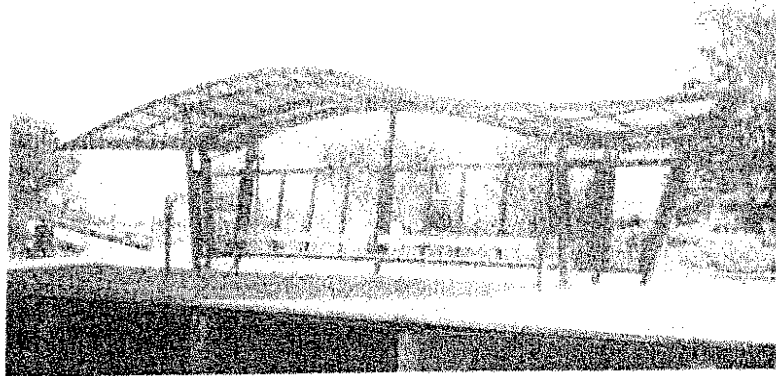
Figure 6.7 - Bus stop example design (section)



Notes: All measurements in millimetres.
Boarding and alighting zones should be free of street furniture.

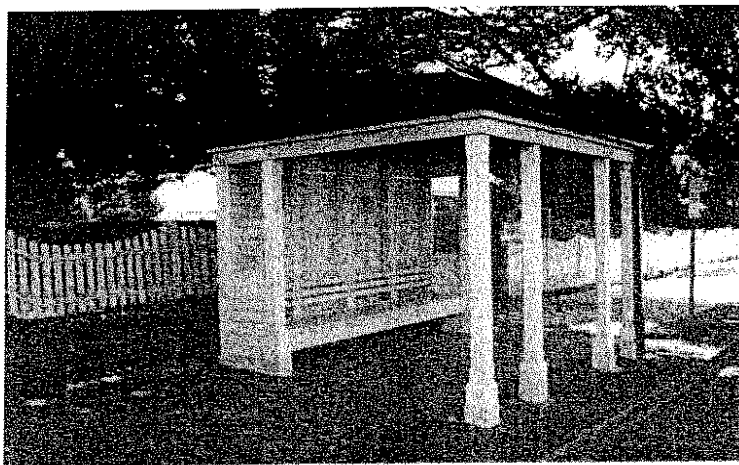
Source: State Transit Authority of NSW (1999a) p 22

Figure 6.8 Shelter at Hallet Cove rail station, Adelaide (1997)



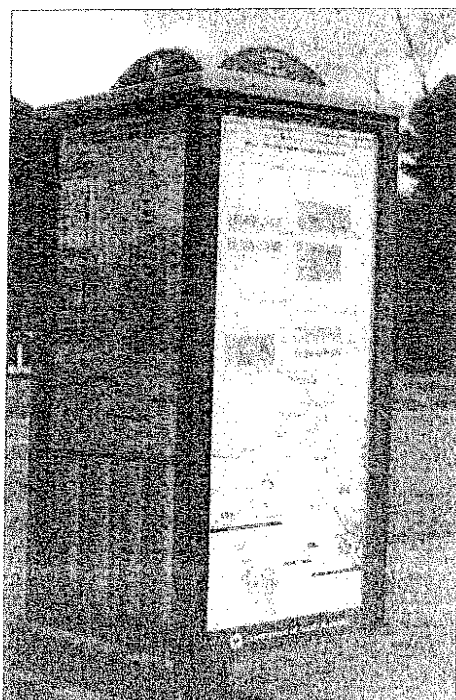
Source: Transit Australia (1997) p 256

Figure 6.9 Heritage bus stop – Braidwood, NSW



Source: Author (2001)

Figure 6.10 Bus Stop Information Stand - Adelaide (1998)



Source: Transit Australia (1999) p 156

Management Model

A strong but collaborative management model is proposed. Capital Transit could be established as a public entity under Commonwealth Government control but with key linkages and input from relevant stakeholder interests.

Representatives from across a range of interests would allow consideration of important policy issues such as integrated transport and land use planning; transport; urban design; environment; tourism and events; etc.

A dedicated authority or Board of Management (BoM) model should be considered to ensure an integrated approach to service planning and operation. It would allow representation by the key stakeholder groups - the National Capital Authority (representing the Commonwealth and all National Capital interests); the ACT Government (perhaps a business unit of Chief Ministers Department or the Department of Urban Services); a representative of the National Capital Attractions Group (representing major Institutions and tourist attractions); an ACT business representative (eg from the hospitality sector); an elected representative from a bus user group; and a representative from the service operator (assuming the system operates under a discrete contract for service arrangement responsible to the BoM). Its key responsibilities should include:

- the preparation and implementation of a business model with capital and operational funding sources identified and secured;
- the sound integration of National Transit and ACTION operations (including ticketing system);
- facilitating regular passenger feedback and management responses to issues of service, infrastructure and passenger information. Use this feedback to stimulate innovation and other improvements;
- the establishment of a stakeholder consultation mechanism to ensure the ongoing interests of all parties including government; passengers; staff; destination attractions; business, etc are each represented and have their concerns addressed; and
- initiating regular independent monitoring and evaluation of the transit operation to ensure it meets its prime objectives and operates in sound businesslike manner.

Capital Transit should be encouraged to become financially self sustaining and held publicly accountable through its Board of Management. It would seek capital and operational funding from Government grants and programs (see Potential Funding Sources below), fare revenue, sponsorships and stakeholder partnerships (such as joint ticketing arrangements with National Institutions and attractions).

As noted above, it is proposed to contract the operation of the Capital Transit service to ACTION for the initial establishment phase. This arrangement would not necessarily include ancillary services such as maintenance and presentation of bus stops; marketing and promotion; corporate services, etc. Indeed, specialist functions may be more appropriately and cost effectively sourced from the market directly. Each service provider would then be subject to performance criteria requiring professionalism and excellence in service delivery - factors which, with some notable exceptions, remain too rare in the Australian urban transport industry.

6.3 POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

While it is beyond the scope of this project to provide full costings or to develop the business case for the Capital Transit proposal, some potential sources of funding might include:

- revenue raised from fares (may meet operational costs in time but unlikely to be sufficient to service significant capital and other start-up requirements);
- subsidy from National Institutions and attractions (minimal at best);
- direct Government subsidy (possible seed funding in terms of enhancing awareness of the National Capital. A partnership approach with ACT Government preferred);
- grants or subsidies from the Commonwealth Government's Greenhouse Abatement Program (good potential initially but less likely to be sustained over the long term); and
- subsidy based on revenues obtained from pay parking fees (strongest contender).

Pay Parking

The introduction of fee based parking has the potential to deliver a number of benefits for the Central National Area. It would be an important first step in establishing a mechanism to better manage demand for parking resources and a means to earn a return on the investment. In the context of the planning and environmental priorities this project has identified, all or some of the revenue raised could be used to fund Capital Transit as the means of assisting to resolve the problems associated with access and making a practical contribution towards reversing the city's increase in Greenhouse gas emissions.

Pay parking is a common demand management tool (see case studies below). In Canberra, pay parking occurs in an inequitable fashion - primarily in Civic and Woden. The implementation of pay parking in the Central National Area would provide a return on an extremely valuable resource which could and should be earning revenue for the public purse. For visitors moving between attractions, a parking charge at every venue would provide a strong incentive to use the transit alternative so as to avoid a parking charge at every venue.

The NSW Parking Space Levy Scheme

In 1992 the NSW State Government introduced the *NSW Parking Space Levy Scheme*. The levy aims to reduce car usage in selected areas of the city with consequential reductions in vehicle emissions and traffic congestion. It applies to commercial and tenant car spaces only – and exempts parking used for residential, shopping, hotel and club purposes. The funds collected from the levy are used to construct transit initiatives such as bus interchanges, ferry wharves and commuter car parking at rail stations. (Mathews, 2000; Sydney Morning Herald, 2000)

Initially the levy was applied at a rate of \$200 per annum to 36,000 parking bays located in the Sydney City Council area and the business districts of North Sydney and Milsons Point. The rate was subsequently increased to \$400 per bay in 1997 and to \$800 in 2000. (Mathews, 2000)

In 2000 the scheme was extended to include 50,000 similar parking spaces in Bondi, Parramatta, Chatswood and St Leonards with a \$400 annual rate applied to each space. (Mathews, 2000; SMH, 2000)

In total the levy raises some \$50 million per annum, but following intense lobbying by commercial car park operators, a legislative amendment was passed which limits future increases in the levy to the Consumer Price Index. (Mathews, 2000)

Perth Parking Policy

The Perth Parking Policy and fee based licensing system came into operation in mid 1999 and provides for a tax on all 56,000 non-residential parking bays in the defined (inner city) management area. It builds on existing licensing arrangements which have been in place since the early 1980s to raise funds to provide free public transport within the central city area.

The Perth Parking Policy is a key element of strategic transport planning in the city. It aims to produce efficient transport outcomes through greater integration and multi-modal transport planning with an emphasis on the mutually supportive links between land use and transport system development. Perth recognised that the negative impacts of the car require appropriate management. Its policies identify and utilise parking "...as an effective tool to manage and limit traffic within the City Centre." (Brown, 2000, p 7)

The Policy is a partnership approach by the State Government and the City of Perth. "The philosophical basis for the Policy is travel demand management and strategic infrastructure investment. It effectively changes the approach to parking provision and management in the City of Perth from the previous predict and provide model to a model in which the establishment and use of parking is determined within the context of the regional transport strategy's desired outcomes: modal shift, increased car occupancy rates and limiting social and environmental impacts." (Brown, 2000, p 8)

The 1999 extension of the licensing scheme will provide a secure financial basis for continued subsidy of public transport by requiring the fee revenue to be spent within the boundaries of the area from which it is raised - the central city. It also frees the city (as an owner and operator of parking facilities) from having to re-invest parking revenue back into parking and enables the City to use its parking revenues for the purposes it determines. It is now placed into a competitively neutral position with private sector providers of public parking.

The Perth Parking Management Act specifies that the revenue raised from the parking licence fees must be used to support activities that improve the amenity and accessibility of the central city area. The CAT bus service and the Free Transit Zone (which covers travel on all public buses and trains within a defined city area) provide for free transport to some 7.3 million passengers annually. As the total cost of providing these services is between \$4.3 million and \$4.5 million annually, a shortfall of about \$1 million is incurred from the revenue raised from parking licence fees. (Brown, 2000, p 15)

The annual fee per parking bay is \$70. This compares to the cost of leasing a parking bay - typically \$4,800 per annum along King Georges Terrace dropping to \$720 per year in parts of West Perth (p16). In 1999/00 about \$3.25 million was raised from over 50,000 parking bays. Estimated revenue for 2000-01 is \$3.3 to \$3.4 million. Set up and administration costs totalled \$0.510 million in 1999-00 but were anticipated to fall significantly to \$0.270 million in the current financial year.

Analysis

Both the Sydney and Perth parking licence models have attributes which are applicable to Canberra. Indeed the Perth model would be ideal - although it is noted that Parliamentary approval would need to be obtained to establish fee based parking in the Parliamentary Zone. On the basis of a policy of collecting a licence fee of say \$100 per annum, per parking bay, revenue of \$0.5m per annum would be derived from each 5,000 bays.

The Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program

The Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program (GGAB) aims to assist Australia reduce its Greenhouse gas emissions to meet its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Some \$400 million has been allocated to the Program between 2000-01 and 2003-04. (Australian Greenhouse Office, 2000)

The Program specifically targets cost effective and sustained abatement projects. One of the program's themes includes the built environment and infrastructure, which includes opportunities for abatement through encouraging greenhouse-efficient technologies in the transport sector.

The Capital Transit proposal would therefore appear to meet the criteria for funding by encouraging the use of alternative, less polluting, transport modes. It may also provide capital funding for new CNG fuelled buses or to convert existing buses.

6.4 POSSIBLE FUTURE EXTENSIONS TO SERVICE

Based on the likely success of the proposed Capital Transit service, it may be feasible to extend the network to other sites of National significance. With the opening of the new National Museum of Australia (NMA), a much larger market is emerging due to limited availability of car parking at its Acton Peninsula site.

It may be opportune to give consideration to establishing direct links between the NMA and the City and on to the Australian War Memorial (the second most popular visitor attraction in Canberra). Such a route may also incorporate the Botanical Gardens and/or Telstra Tower as both those sites currently have no public bus access.

Another area of real need is to enhance linkages with ferry operators on the Lake. As the NMA has incorporated a new jetty it is hoped that the (private) ferry operators will be attracted to offer frequent, scheduled services to link the Parliamentary Zone jetties with the NMA and therefore encourage the movement of more people across and around the Lake. Capital Transit may also consider operating a direct (bus-based) cross-Lake service between the Parliamentary Zone and the Australian War Memorial via Anzac Parade in the future.

6.5 NEXT STEPS – FEASIBILITY STUDY

The next stage in developing the Capital Transit proposal is to undertake a detailed feasibility study. Due to the 'public good' nature of the proposal and the high level of commercial risk it would entail, it is acknowledged that private venture capital would be difficult to attract, particularly during the establishment phase. There would, however, be opportunities to develop commercial partnerships and sponsorships, such as through the provision of the infrastructure, information technologies, marketing, etc.

Irrespective of the enterprise ownership arrangements or the source of funding, sound business planning principles and rigorous financial analysis are a pre-requisite to successfully meeting the project's objectives and its long-term viability. In this context, a very brief overview of the key issues to be addressed in the feasibility study follows.

Core business statement

This concise statement would set down the prime goals of Capital Transit:

- to establish a new, high quality transit service which enhances access to, and awareness of, the National Capital's institutions, attractions and employment nodes;
- to demonstrate an attractive alternative to the private car, resulting in a shift in modal preferences away from the car and onto transit;
- to ensure that its services integrate well with all other public transport services, including ferries on Lake Burley Griffin;
- to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Canberra; and
- through a collaborative management approach, maximise co-operation and support from all stakeholders.

Technical feasibility

Technical feasibility will demonstrate what resources would be required to establish Capital Transit services. It would include the infrastructure such as buses, bus stops, passenger information services, etc that are needed and assess staffing, administration and management requirements.

This element of the feasibility study also entails clearly articulating the precise nature of the service envisaged and how it would differentiate itself in the overall mobility market. In the case of Capital Transit, its proposed high frequency of service would have significant resource requirements as it aims to compete for (and win) a significant share of those people who currently use their vehicle to access the attractions and workplaces in the Parliamentary Zone and adjacent areas.

It would also canvass the selection of a suitably qualified operator to establish the service and examine the issue of compliance with regulatory standards and any other requirements.

Market feasibility

Confirming market acceptance and a demand for the Capital Transit service is fundamental. This part of the feasibility will require detailed data on the travel habits of the various market segments identified as offering the greatest potential to use the service – particularly commuters and tourists. It will profile their needs and fine tune the proposed service to match those needs (eg in terms of route structure, frequencies, hours of operation, ticketing, features of the vehicles to be used and bus stops). To succeed the market must be identifiable so as to target the marketing effort; be large enough warrant the resources invested; and be stable – with potential to grow over time.

Market feasibility will also involve examining the competing modes of travel (especially the car) and developing strategies for achieving a modal shift. This will include a comprehensive analysis of parking demand management mechanisms including the closure or time limiting of existing parking areas; the introduction of parking fees for both public and private car parks (and related issues of hypothecation of the revenue raised); and amending land use planning and development requirements which often mandate the provision of parking as a requisite for development.

Promotion and publicity requirements for the establishment and future enhancement of services will need to be addressed in this part of the feasibility. Marketing would need to play a very significant role in changing perceptions of public transport and build their confidence so as to entice people from their cars to use the new service.

Commercial/Financial feasibility

As community service objectives will outweigh commercial considerations, at least in the establishment phase, full financial viability is unlikely to be sought. It is important, however, to ensure that the resources provided, particularly any public grant or subsidy, are applied efficiently towards achieving the core business (and community) goals.

To assist tracking the progress made towards realising its goals, patronage targets and forecasts as well as other benchmarks should be developed. Methods for reporting, measuring and analysing data and assessing results against those benchmarks would also need to be considered.

In common with any start-up enterprise, Capital Transit should identify the strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats facing it (a SWOT analysis). The financial resources required (capital and operating costs) must be calculated and funding sources identified and secured. These may include public funding from both Commonwealth and Territory Government sources with supplementary funding from sources such as fares, sponsorships; stakeholder partnerships, etc.

In calculating the return on investment, the dividends may include non-financial measures such as improved environmental outcomes from reduced air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; less traffic congestion and costs associated with road accidents; and enhanced community benefits derived from easier access to, and greater participation in, activities associated with promoting the National Capital.

Should the combined technical, market and commercial elements of the feasibility study prove inconclusive, it may then be appropriate to consider implementation of a scaled trial of the proposed service. Such a trial should, however, be sufficient both in terms of funding and duration (minimum 12 months) to generate the necessary data to determine viability. Ideally such a trial would need to offer flexibility and be adaptive to newly emerging markets – such as that offered by the newly opened Museum of Australia.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This project has presented a case study in neglect of one of the most fundamental aspects of the functioning of the National Capital - easy transit access to those places and institutions which represent Australia's nationhood.

It has argued that a failing of public policy and budgetary constraints are impacting on the accessibility of the Central National Area. Emerging new developments - which aim to attract increasing numbers of both visitors and employment into the *Place of the People*, are in jeopardy due to a loss of identity and unsustainable patterns of mobility based on cars. Existing National and local planning policies do not adequately acknowledge the problem nor offer a solution.

A new public transport system has been proposed to breath new life and mobility into the area. Designed to be as cost effective as possible through the use of existing resources and infrastructure, the new bus transit would tap the significant visitor and commuter markets to build a viable and ecologically sustainable transit operation which would, in turn help support the ailing ACTION public bus network. With a distinctive identity, the proposed Capital Transit system would offer unprecedented levels of service quality, frequency; and passenger convenience. Coupled with the introduction of appropriate road pricing mechanisms (such as pay parking) transit would be a real competitor to the private vehicle.

Through planning and designing the proposed new Capital Transit system the project has met the objectives it set for itself to solve this transport planning problem:

- to provide a new, high quality and frequent transit system linking the City with the Central National Area to serve both visitors and commuters;
- to promote ecologically sustainable outcomes by facilitating reduced car dependence and importantly, the level of greenhouse gas emissions generated by ACT motorists; and
- by establishing appropriate transit access, the *Place of the People* may become a reality.