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24<sup>th</sup> February 2009

The Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

### **Submission to Senate Enquiry into Public Transport**

#### **Social Impacts of the Lack of Public Transport on the Community, Families, Aged & Younger Members of the Alexandrina Council Region.**

Council appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. Alexandrina Council region covers 18,000sq. kilometres incorporating 28 postcodes and services a population of 22,000 residents.

The lack of appropriate public transport continues to impact on both service providers and consumers of youth, families and aged services within the Alexandrina Council region.

Public transport is provided within the coastal region of Alexandrina Council by:

- Premier Roadlines – (commercial operator)
- Southern Community Transport Service - (HACC funded with Alexandrina & Victor Harbour Council contributions).
- Neighbour Aid - (DFC funded with contribution from Alexandrina Council).
- Peninsula Taxi Service - (commercial operator)

Public transport is provided within the rural and eastern areas of Alexandrina Council by:  
Hills Community Passenger Network – (Funded by Alexandrina, Adelaide Hills & Mt Barker Councils, Govt of SA and HACC).

Strathalbyn Taxi Service –(commercial operator).

Transit Plus – (Private operator).

#### **Unmet Needs**

- Currently public transport services to the major towns of the region are inadequate which has a flow on effect to the smaller communities.  
Affordability and access is limited for families and both youth and aged residents, especially if interconnecting services are required to access the main public transport routes
- Larger buses providing transport to & from Adelaide are restrictive for older and disabled residents due to the steep gradient of the access steps.

- The Transport Subsidy Scheme does not adequately meet the needs of our rural population due to the subsidy percentage and its limitations
- Govt funding is inadequate to cover the basic transport needs within the rural region of the Council. Demand for health related transport diminishes the ability to provide access for social activities, shopping and other basic activities. This has a flow on effect creating social isolation that leads to mental and physical ill health.
- Transport services for disadvantage and chronically ill people to access essential health services are limited, especially in the smaller rural areas. Consideration of a roll out of the Health Bus program currently being trialled on the Yorke Peninsula would greatly benefit the region.
- With the cessation of the contracted transport service to the local primary school in Goolwa and the introduction of an annual membership fee by Southern Community Transport Scheme the small Neighbour Aid project has experienced a 28.5% increase in demand in the past 6 months. As a result only crisis requests are now being considered once again reducing transport opportunities for services such as shopping and social programs.
- The Transit Plus mini bus operates one day per week from Clayton, through Milang and to Strathalbyn linking with a bus that then travels onto Adelaide. However it invariably does not match appointment times and is a long day for seniors even though it only allows for 3-4 hours in the city.
- There is no 'cross regional' transport from Langhorne Creek, Milang, Strath to Goolwa, Port Elliot, Middleton and Victor Harbor.
- Current Taxi costs are prohibitive for most people.
- Strathalbyn – the current level of transport (or lack of) is an ongoing issue and with a predicted increase in population of 43% over the next 12 years an efficient and regular transport system needs to be set in place now. (Planning SA figures show that Strathalbyn district's population will increase from 9463 ( 2006 figures) to 13,537 by 2021.
- There is predicted growth across all age groups and the issue of transport will only be exacerbated as more people rely on public transport because they are no longer able to drive or owning a car is simply out of their reach financially.
- On weekends there is no bus service from Strathalbyn. During the week (Monday – Friday) the service is intermittent with only two buses per day leaving and returning to Strathalbyn for Mt Barker. An additional bus leaves during school terms.
- The limited service causes difficulties for all people who do not have access to private transport including access to medical appointments, further education and work commitments as well as social events. The current level of transport also has an impact on those wishing to visit the town for events or simply to visit family and friends.
- Youth retention in the region is a pressing issue and has implications for urban growth management strategies aiming to attract and retain young families. Young people report that because of the limited transport they have little choice but to seek greater opportunities away from the regional areas.

- Inadequate public transport options remain a priority issue for young people who have to rely on individual transport and are therefore more likely to have road accidents than their metropolitan counterparts. A recent survey identified that young people engage in a number of risk-taking behaviours including being a passenger in car where the driver is under the influence of drugs or alcohol and that over 70% of respondents would use public transport as an alternative to drinking and driving with approximately 25% of those surveyed reported they had driven without a licence or unregistered and 16% had hitch hiked.
- Lack of frequency, routes and affordability are seen as the major concerns of young people who cited that more frequent services to and from the coastal townships of Goolwa and Victor Harbor and reinstating the more frequent weekend services between Strathalbyn and Mt Barker would be welcomed as many are unable to take up work opportunities due to lack of transport.

Thankyou again and we trust there will be greater certainty of long term Federal and State Government funding that enables communities to function with appropriate levels of access to meet their needs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Coombe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**John Coombe**  
Chief Executive