



West Coast Council

INTERTOWN TRANSPORT TRIAL

Key Findings and Recommendations

September 2021

West Coast Council Intertown Transport Trial

Introduction

The West Coast Council (WCC) and its Education and Training Committee (ETC) with funding supplied by the Tasmanian Government, instigated the West Coast Intertown Transport Trial for a period of (12) twelve months, which was extended due to Covid-19.

The funding allocation of \$100,000 was for a contracted provider to trial transport services between West Coast Towns that currently had no or limited transportation service. The aim of the trial was to gain knowledge of usage, possible best routes for take up of the services and its potential for ongoing service provision. The trial was designed to be flexible, with the ability to amend route and timetabling when needed.

Key Findings

The Intertown transport service did not have the anticipated rate of take up that was initially expected and demonstrated that the service models trailed were unviable even with significant subsidies due to minimal passenger numbers. Prices were not expensive on a state basis and were commensurate with the level of subsidy provided, however, a higher subsidy and lower ticket prices may have increased use. The Intertown Service failed to demonstrate a particular need on any of the identified routes, nor identify any times of the week that were more popular.

Social group bookings were not highly utilised with community members seeking transport through alternative networks including door to door volunteer services. Reluctance to socialise during the pandemic was cited as a possible barrier to the service uptake.

The trial of an Intertown Transport service from Rosebery to the Zeehan swimming pool was not utilised, with 0 passengers. One barrier identified was the need for parents to supply child restraints due to vehicle licencing and size.

Total use and patronage of the Intertown Transport Trial included 231 essential item runs made in response to Covid-19 restrictions, 113 passengers attending planned events via a booking system and 111 passengers using the service via scheduled runs.

The trial required that routes and timetables be varied to assess demand, however, this may have impacted the ability of people to understand where and when services would be available. The timetables were extensively marketed, with flyers, social media, radio, and direct contact with groups, however, there was still many people unaware of the service or relying on word of mouth for updates. It is likely that for any service to be successful significant subsidies for marketing, information dispersal, and ensuring timetables are accessible and understandable will be required.

Recommendations

1. Improve promotion of the existing public bus service (Burnie – West Coast – Hobart)
2. Consider providing or supporting a bus service at peak community event times as identified by the community.
3. That a relevant organisation in partnership with a local motor industry training organisation and Libraries Tasmania Language, Literacy and Numeracy service undertake a feasibility study to determine the potential for a 'We have Wheels' program. A scheme to assist young people and low-income earners gain the skills to transform an old vehicle into a reliable one.
4. That a ride sharing type app or Facebook page be created to advertise, offer or request lifts to and from a destination.
5. The West Coast Council integrate an intertown transport needs analysis into future planning and consultation with a focus on clarifying real vs. perceived need, demonstrated demand and affordability.