



ACT
Government

ACTION PLAN

Weekend bus service reliability

TRANSPORT CANBERRA AND CITY
SERVICES DIRECTORATE

SEPTEMBER 2019

Executive Summary

The ACT Government acknowledges that at present, the reliability of weekend bus services operated by Transport Canberra does not meet the expectations of Canberrans.

With the implementation of the integrated light rail and bus network, Transport Canberra introduced a significant increase in weekend services compared to the previous timetable. This was in line with the principle to provide more weekend services more often. The increase in services is working to bring more passengers to the network with a 30% increase in patronage year on year.

Ahead of the introduction of the new network Transport Canberra recruited an additional 60 drivers and reasonably expected to deliver a consistently reliable weekend service. However, due to a higher than anticipated rate of separation of drivers aligning with the new network and other factors such as the desirability of shift lengths and patterns for drivers volunteering for additional overtime Transport Canberra has not been able to meet our expected level of reliability.

This document sets out the range of strategies in place to address the issue of weekend reliability as the ACT Government's action plan to improve the reliability of weekend bus services.

This document outlines the Government's plan to improve weekend bus reliability. It consists of a series of actions to deliver reliability. The 10 specific actions set out in this plan are grouped under four themes:

- Bus driver recruitment
- Improving information for customers
- Improving workforce planning
- Improving operational business practices
- Weekend timetable update

Each action is classified as:

- Short term – to be delivered within 6 months, including actions already underway or completed;
- Medium term – to be delivered in 6 to 12 months; and
- Long term – to be delivered in 12 months or more.

The ACT Government has committed to reporting back to the Legislative Assembly and to the community on a quarterly basis on the reliability of weekend bus services and progress towards implementing this action plan. The first quarterly report will be released in October 2019.

List of Actions

Bus driver recruitment

Action 1 – continuous recruitment of bus drivers

Action 2 – prioritise applicants interested in weekend work

Improving information for customers

Action 3 – promoting NXTBUS for planning journeys on weekends

Action 4 – replace NXTBUS with new customer information systems and apps

Improving workforce planning

Action 5 – workforce development plan

Improving operational business practices

Action 6 – increased use of stand-by drivers

Action 7 – encourage more drivers on weekends

Action 8 – consultation on potential changes to conditions for Transport Canberra bus drivers

Weekend timetable update

Action 9 – implement an interim weekend timetable to immediately improve reliability

Action 10 – incrementally increase weekend services to meet the Network 19 plan

Action Plan

Bus driver recruitment

Action 1 – continuous recruitment of bus drivers

Timeframe: Short term

Status: Ongoing

Transport Canberra previously undertook recruitment once a year and so did not regularly create awareness or promote opportunities to join the driver workforce. With the growing demand for additional drivers this process was reviewed, and Transport Canberra has now implemented an improved continuous recruitment program. This continuous process ensures we recruit the required number of drivers to deliver the new public transport network, whilst also managing attrition.

Applicants for driver positions, at the end of August had reached 185, and is on track to exceed the applications received in the previous year.

Assessment sessions including functional drives in the depot are on-going and are currently being held twice monthly.

Transport Canberra is prioritising applicants in the recruitment process who are interested in weekend work, while ensuring that all eligibility and training requirements are met.

This action will be underpinned by a comprehensive review of and implementation of a workforce plan that will take into account the new public transport network requirements, new services to planned population growth areas, the new Woden depot, and other future transport plans.

Action 2 – prioritise applicants interested in weekend work

Timeframe: Short term

Status: Ongoing

Transport Canberra is improving its recruitment practices by:

- running parallel elements of the recruitment process to accelerate candidates through the pipeline to employment;
- fast-tracking candidates who already meet a number of the mandatory eligibility requirements;
- testing contemporary approaches to marketing the employment offer, using multiple channels such as social media and online video; and
- increasing up training resourcing capacity to meet increased demand.

Transport Canberra is also investigating the introduction of a lateral recruitment program that recognises experience, qualifications and licences, as well as identifying sources of high-potential candidates.

Improving information for customers

Action 3 – promoting NXTBUS for planning journeys on weekends

Timeframe: Short term

Status: Ongoing

Transport Canberra will continue to promote NXTBUS for customers planning journeys on public transport on weekends. NXTBUS provides information about the expected departure time of bus services that is available up to 90 minutes before their departure, whenever Transport Canberra bus services are operating. It complements other information about services available to customers, such as the online journey planner and printed timetable information. Transport Canberra has longer term plans in place to develop a more integrated journey planner and real time application.

This action will be ongoing, with Transport Canberra continuously pushing information to customers through a range of different channels, including the TC website, social media and customer service channels.

Transport Canberra will also be investigating ways of providing updated service information to customers at interchanges and also providing cancellations in a more user friendly format.

Action 4 – replace NXTBUS with new customer information systems and apps

Timeframe: Long term

Status: Not yet commenced

Procurement of a new information system delivered for Canberra will provide better information for customers about service disruptions in real time with the potential to automatically push information to customers. This will lead to a new apps for Transport Canberra customers.

Transport Canberra will review all information provided to customers to identify further improvements that can be made to the quality and timeliness of information, and the way information is provided to customers, particularly in relation to service disruptions.

Customer service assistants will be deployed at interchanges on weekends to provide up to date customer information.

Improving workforce planning

Action 5 – workforce development plan

Timeframe: Medium term

Status: In Progress

Transport Canberra is developing a renewed workforce plan for bus drivers that will enable the calculation and projection of workforce resourcing for current and future operational service requirements, including the future expansion of the bus network. The plan will incorporate consideration of the issues facing the network out to a one year time horizon and two subsequent time horizons at the three year and five year points.

The current method of workforce planning has been static rather than dynamic, and specific to each depot, rather than a whole of network view. The new process will encompass current and future depots in one dynamic tool. Consideration will also be made based on estimates of route and population growth as the Molonglo, Northern Gungahlin and Ginninderry area populations increase.

The tool will be used to develop several key initiatives that determine or impact the driver and network support workforce.

Initial work has enabled improvements to be made, including;

- the identification of a range of staffing options required to deliver any given service schedule based on policy settings, the current uptake of leave and other dependencies;
- the establishment of a relief ratio to determine total staffing required to provide the service and ensure the reduction in accrued entitlement liabilities;
- clarity around the use of annual leave and other entitlements, so that these can be effectively managed in a planned and sometimes tactical approach, including identifying times when it is most beneficial to offer annual leave;
- provided a basis to determine the maximum capacity to train additional drivers and the timeframes required to hit specific numerical targets for driver numbers;
- enabling driver continuation training to be more effectively planned and delivered; and
- modelling attrition and other factors that may impact service delivery.

Improving operational business practices

Action 6 – increased use of stand-by drivers

Timeframe: Short term

Status: Ongoing

Transport Canberra will increase the use of stand-by drivers on weekends to ensure that reliability is met where unexpected absences of drivers occur or to address other incidents such as breakdowns.

Reliable increase in availability of stand-by drivers will support Action 10 to incrementally increase weekend services.

Action 7 – encouraging more drivers on weekends

Timeframe: Short term

Status: Ongoing

Transport Canberra will work with staff and unions to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of rostering for Transport Canberra bus drivers, other business processes and any other improvements that could encourage more bus drivers to work weekends.

Examples already being implemented include providing longer shifts and spreading workloads between the Belconnen and Tuggeranong depots.

Action 8 – consultation on potential changes to conditions for Transport Canberra bus drivers

Timeframe: Long term

Status: Not yet commenced

Bus drivers and other Transport Canberra operational staff are employed under the conditions set out in the *Transport Canberra Operations (ACTION) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021*.

The ACT Government will consult with staff and unions to identify potential changes to conditions that may improve Transport Canberra's capacity to deliver a reliable, seven day a week public transport network.

Transport Canberra will consider a range of options including weekend rostering and incentives for drivers working on weekends.

Weekend timetable update

Action 9 – implement an interim weekend timetable to immediately improve reliability

Timeframe: Short term

Status: Commenced

Transport Canberra will introduce an updated weekend timetable from 28 September 2019.

The most popular elements of the new transport network are proposed to remain:

- frequent rapid services;
- services will still start early and run late; and
- weekend services will run on the same route and same number as the weekday services.

This change is expected to allow Transport Canberra to meet its reliability target for weekend services in the short term, while other actions are delivered.

The interim timetable will continue to offer more weekend services than the same time last year.

Action 10 – incrementally increase weekend services to meet the Network 19 plan

Timeframe: Short term

Status: Commenced

Following the implementation of Action 8 and Action 3, as bus operator numbers increase, the ACT Government will consider incremental increases to the frequency of local services, with a view to returning to the frequency of services.