

Review of Bus Services

Maroondah

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1.0 Introduction

The City of Maroondah, with a residential population of approximately 100,000 residents, is located in Melbourne's outer east, 25 kilometres east of the Melbourne CBD.

The City of Maroondah includes the activity centres of Ringwood and Croydon, with Ringwood identified as a Transit City and Central Activity District. State Government planning and transport policies have acknowledged the need for public transport to underpin the designated Central Activity Districts.

Accessibility is of critical importance within Maroondah, since the municipality has one of the highest proportions of people with a disability. As such infrastructure, in the form of bus stops and vehicles need to be accessible so that they can be used by people with a range of mobility aids and disabilities.

Likewise service levels need to be of a standard that does not restrict the mobility of people that are reliant on public transport services and takes into account the urban revitalisation that is being encouraged within Ringwood and Croydon.

2.0 Current Bus Services within Maroondah

While the Belgrave and Lilydale lines provide an east-west connection within Maroondah with the rail junction at Ringwood, the majority of Maroondah residents reside beyond convenient walking distance to stations on these lines. As such there is an important role for bus services to improve the mobility of residents within Maroondah.

While it would appear that Maroondah has good overall public transport coverage there are a number of gaps; including Canterbury Road between Ringwood and Box Hill, Mount Dandenong Road from Ringwood and Warranwood in Maroondah's north.

The introduction of minimum service standards has seen improvements to frequencies and operating spans but there are a number of routes that still do not comply with these standards. In addition routes with high patronage levels and travel along major roads do not have a level of service comparable to main public transport routes.

Several routes are circuitous in nature leading to public transport journeys that are uncompetitive with private car travel.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 Identifying service gaps

New bus routes are required to service parts of Maroondah that have residential or specialised activity areas that are currently beyond reasonable walking distance to a bus service. The following recommendations will address these service gaps:

- A new bus route directly along Mount Dandenong Road from Ringwood to Croydon. This would service Maroondah Hospital, the Karralyka Centre and Civic Centre and the medical precinct in Ringwood East.
- A new bus route along Canterbury Road between Box Hill and Ringwood. This would service the Maroondah Indoor Sports Centre and provide a continuous service along Canterbury Road.
- Local services within Warranwood to improve access to public transport. Warranwood is a residential area, with many houses situated beyond walking distance through roads. A service could operate through Warranwood and connect with bus route 364/304 to provide services to Ringwood or Doncaster.

3.2 Frequencies and operating spans

All services within Maroondah should be upgraded to the State Government's minimum service standards. For example routes 304,364, 366, 367, 270 and 271 currently do not adhere to these standards. In addition, these services have also operated with a summer holiday timetable over the Christmas/New Year period with the service being substantially reduced during this time. Given that bus frequencies are not comparable to standards on the rail network, any reduction in timetabled services severely reduces mobility.

Routes that travel along main roads and connect multiple activity centres should receive further upgrades above the minimum service standards. The success of the 901 SmartBus between Ringwood and Frankston, which operates at a 15 minute or half hourly frequency with services operating until midnight six days a week, demonstrates that public transport

will be utilised if services are available. Given the prominent activity centres that are serviced by the SmartBus service, midnight services on a Sunday should be introduced, as well as 20 minute weekend frequencies to ensure connectivity with the rail network.

Route 670 along Maroondah Highway, connecting Ringwood, Croydon, Chrinside Park and Lilydale should provide at least a half hour frequency and services through to midnight. Given Ringwood's status as a Central Activity District, it is imperative that public transport services are upgraded to serve the residential, commercial, recreational and civic opportunities within the centre.

Likewise route 737 should receive further service improvements to provide a direct north/south route between the Belgrave and Lilydale lines, particularly given that both Croydon and Boronia are designated activity centres.

3.3 Route structure

Bus services within Maroondah should be clearly delineated between trunk routes and local services. This will reduce the level of confusion that exists with bus services and provide journey times that are competitive with car travel.

Localised services should primarily connect with trunk routes and could utilise smaller buses to make it easier to traverse residential streets. Redesigning the network along a hub and spoke principle, will reduce duplication and ease passenger confusion.

Peak hour services, such as route 306 should be absorbed into improving the frequency of corresponding bus services, such as routes 304/364. In addition services should not have route deviations or stop short of their destination, such as route 304 which terminates at Warrandyte Bridge on weekends.

4.0 Conclusion

Enhancing the level of bus services within Maroondah will enhance Ringwood's status as a Central Activity District and enhance the mobility of the Maroondah community. Given the residential populations within Maroondah, public transport has the potential to improve the mobility of the community and facilitate the urban revitalisation of Ringwood and Croydon.

Gaps in network coverage must be addressed to ensure that the community has a level of access to bus services. Further service improvements should also be progressively introduced, with an initial emphasis on routes that do not meet minimum service standards.