

# YNOT Submission to the Draft Transport Access Strategy

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## Introduction

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Tasmanian Government in regards to the *Draft Transport Access Strategy*.

YNOT is the peak body for the non-government youth sector in Tasmania. YNOT represents the interests of its members as well as the interests of young people aged 12 to 25 years of age. Integral to the work of YNOT is the youth participation structure, the Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF). TYF is Tasmania's peak youth consultative and participatory body.

YNOT believes that the issue of transport disadvantage is an important one, and one that needs to be a focal point for the Tasmanian Government as it affects many of Tasmania's young people, particularly young people with a disability, single parents or those living in rural areas. A key role of YNOT is to advocate for for all young Tasmanians to be included in all aspects of society, which gives them opportunities and ability to participate in their communities. YNOT supports the findings of the Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS) who were referenced in the *Draft Transport Strategy*, in regards to young people's needs. Public transport, community based transport, taxis and other transport options are necessary for young people to access education, training, employment, health services, support services and recreational and social activities, which are vital for young people contributing to the community.

To inform this submission, YNOT is utilising results from its own consultation process with young people, as well as drawing upon further current research. In 2010, YNOT conducted a state-wide youth forum, with young people on the issue of transport in Tasmania, the forum brought together services, operators and young people from around the state and gave them the opportunity to voice their opinions and offer possible solutions to transport issues.

YNOT will use this submission to highlight the concerns surrounding the cost of public transport and other reliable transport options, the need for public transport services to be aligned, access and equity of public transport, learning to drive private vehicles being the only viable means of transport for some young people, the need for more mechanisms of feedback, the issue of stigmatisation around public transport and drivers, and the need for support for people using public transport.

## YNOT's Response to the Draft Transport Access Strategy

### **1: Costs of public transport for young people**

YNOT maintains that young people are one of the cohorts most reliant on public transportation largely due to their age and circumstances. There are a variety of factors contributing to this including; the challenges associated with being able to afford their own cars, limited access to a willing supervisory driver or suitable car to learn to drive, and not being old enough to apply for a drivers licence. Further, public transport is not always an affordable option for young people as bus fares are expensive depending on one's income and fares have continued to increase over time. For students, there is a small discount compared to non-students on public transport, however students are also likely to use public transport more frequently.

Young people commonly have a low income, as they tend to be studying full time and living off low rates of student youth allowance or job seeker allowance and those that have jobs are living off casual or part time wages or even apprenticeship wages. Many young people have to catch more than one bus and find it is often necessary to purchase separate tickets for each different bus service, therefore YNOT supports the conclusion from the proposed Transport Strategy that a system of transfers between services must be implemented (Department of State Growth, 2016).

As mentioned previously young people are more likely to be on lower incomes than older members of the community, some of whom may have further education and steadier employment. Again, young people often have low incomes and therefore may only be able to afford housing in the more rural parts or urban fringes of Tasmania due to the low rates of affordable housing in urban areas. Bus fares from urban fringes and rural areas are likely to be more expensive than within urban areas. This means young people who need to travel in for education, employment, services and recreational activities are further disadvantaged due to having to pay higher bus fares and often having to catch more than one bus, which means often having to pay multiple fares.

### **2: The need for public transport services to be aligned**

It is clear there is a case for an effectively aligned public transport service in Tasmania. YNOT is aware that many young people find it difficult to navigate the information available on transport, let alone across multiple services. For example, having to catch more than one bus can be confusing for young people as there is no centralised website or mobile application for young people to be able to find all the information they need to get places as

efficiently as possible. YNOT believes work needs to be done in regards to making it easier for young people to access all the information needed to use public transport in one place. YNOT agrees with TasCOSS's recommendations that it is difficult for everyone, including young people, to find information about bus services, as there is a need for a centralised source of information about services in particular areas, timetables, fares and routes. YNOT believes this information should be available on a website with all information interrelated in a simple, easy to read format. YNOT also agrees with the Department of State Growth's recommendation that the development of a journey planner, something equivalent to Metro Tasmania's Trip Planner, but additionally integrating all Tasmanian bus services timetable and route information is needed (Department of State Growth, 2016). This would make it easier for young people to work out which buses they need to catch and at what time, particularly if there is a need for them to catch multiple buses operated by different services (Department of State Growth, 2016).

Another related issue to catching multiple buses is the bus services often do not align and therefore young people can have large waiting times between buses. This may disrupt education if the young person is enrolled across campuses. For example, attending TAFE and college will require longer travel times between classes for students. YNOT agrees with the Tasmanian Government that public transport services need to work together in a co-ordinated way so waiting times between buses are reasonable (Youth Network of Tasmania, 2014).

The participants at the TYF Transport State-wide Forum also expressed that buses need to run at the times indicated on the timetables, as buses do not consistently arrive at the time indicated (Tasmanian Youth Forum, 2010). Young people rely on public transport to get to education, employment or appointments on time and if public transport is late or early to the time indicated on the timetable, then young people will not get where they need to be when they need to be there. Sometimes buses are late due to traffic, particularly in peak hour traffic times, but bus timetables should be amended during these times to allow for this. This will prevent young people waiting at bus stops for longer periods of time, particularly if the bus stop is not of a good standard or young people do not feel safe.

### **3: Access and equity of public transport**

YNOT acknowledges that having access to safe and reliable public transport creates better opportunities for young people to participate and engage in education, employment and a variety of different recreational activities (Youth Network of Tasmania, 2014).

YNOT agrees with TasCOSS's finding, which says everyone; including young people, often need transport outside of the span of hours in which most public transport services usually operate (Department of State Growth, 2016). Services in rural areas and even on the fringes of urban areas are usually less frequent and operate over a shorter span of hours compared with services in urban areas. Young people who start and finish work outside of the weekday 8am-6pm span of hours, which includes many occupations such as the hospitality and food industries, some retailers and shift work, and are reliant on public transport are likely to find it difficult using public transport to and from work outside the above span of hours. This means young people may have trouble getting to and from work, have limited availability times for employment, be reliant on friends and family, be very early for work, be late for work or have to wait around after their shift is finished. YNOT is in agreement with the Department of State Growth (2016) that providing extra services across all days of the week and wider span of hours is important in their ability to live a full life.

The accessibility of bus stops can also be a major barrier to those young people with a disability or pram (Department of State Growth, 2016). Many bus stops can be difficult to access due to location, footpath or bus stop facilities, such as seating, unless they are in the main bus malls in the city areas. This means young people, particularly young people with children or a disability, often have trouble getting the bus and getting to and from their destination. YNOT understands that for young people with a disability or small children, using a bus or other form of public transport may be impractical and therefore taxis may be the only option of public transport, which is an expensive alternative. For young people who need wheelchair accessible taxis, there may be waiting times due to the limited number of these taxis in operation (Department of State Growth, 2016). YNOT therefore believes there should be more wheelchair accessible taxis available.

Some young people are also not allowed or willing to use public transport due to issues with bullying and violent behaviour. These young people may not have any transport options left and are often the same cohort of young people who are likely to have unstable living environments and experiencing other forms of disadvantage. Consideration of how these young people, who may be excluded from public transport, can access transport is important.

#### **4: Learning to drive being the only viable means of transport for some young people**

YNOT believes additional services are needed in Tasmania to assist young people in gaining their driver's licences. Many young people want to drive but do not have access to driving programs, cannot afford the cost of driving programs or have no means of gaining the required hours (Youth Network of Tasmania, 2014). Particularly for those young people living

in rural areas where there are limited buses, learning to drive may be the only viable means of transport.

Young people make up a large proportion of road accident statistics and road accidents are one of the leading causes of death in young people (Department of State Growth, 2016). YNOT believes a greater availability and access to learner driver programs would reduce this. There is a limited amount of learner driver programs in Tasmania, which was raised as a concern for young people at the transport consultation (Tasmanian Youth Forum, 2010), Young people also raised the matters of cost and waiting times for these driver programs as key concerns. Throughout the TYF State-wide Forum on transport the participants thought of a number of initiatives they believed could be beneficial to Tasmanian young people in regards to driving and driving safety. This included defensive driving training for young people, which involves learning how to drive in different conditions, how to deal with distractions and avoid hazards. Compulsory breath testing on P platers was also suggested and conditional licensing, which would mean learning drivers being required to do more varied types of driver education and driving in different conditions such as in the rain or at night time (Tasmanian Youth Forum, 2010).

YNOT believes further road safety initiatives need to be implemented. By limiting the access the young people have to driving will only create barriers for young people in education, gaining employment, expanding social networks and participating in recreational activities. Road safety initiatives can be done in ways in which will not adversely affect young people and instead will help them with being safer on the road. Initiatives such as mechanics ensuring second hand vehicles, which young people are more likely to purchase due to costs, are thoroughly checked before the final purchase (Youth Network of Tasmania, 2016).

Attitudes related to driving also play a role in the safety of driving for young people as well as safety on public transport. YNOT found young people do not often speak up when in a car with a driver who they believe is unsafe (Youth Network of Tasmania, 2014). Community and family attitudes and practices affect the behaviour of young drivers, particularly in regards to speeding and hooning. YNOT argues the broader community needs to be involved in changing these attitudes and behaviours. YNOT concludes additional driving workshops with community volunteers are also beneficial as they focus on attitudes to driving and sharing experiences on how road accidents impact lives (Youth Network of Tasmania, 2014).

## **5: The need for increased mechanisms of feedback**

YNOT agrees that many young people believe it is difficult for them to provide feedback to transport operators in regards to their services (Tasmanian Youth Forum, 2010; Department

of State Growth, 2016). To assist with this issue, YNOT suggests better utilisation of the State Government's, or the development of a similar stakeholder group to the Student Users Transport Group (STUG). YNOT agrees that developing a better understanding of young people's travel needs, particularly those with a disability, low income or children, may reveal the need for specific training to ensure transport operators and providers of transport infrastructure are aware of specific young user perspectives and requirements (Department of State Growth, 2016).

#### **6: The issue of stigmatisation of young people on public transport**

YNOT believes young people often experience stigmatisation when catching public transport, in particular with bus drivers and older public transport users who may hold assumptions that young people are troublemakers on buses. While this may be the case in some circumstances, stereotyping all young people collectively will only serve to create issues between young people and bus drivers. YNOT recommends some form of training and support be offered to bus drivers, particularly those who are likely to be driving a bus in peak times when many young people are going between locations, such as school start, or finish times. An initiative to support drivers for this issue would help, as it is important that drivers are able to confidently perform their jobs and young people are able to access transport.

#### **7: The need for further support for young people using public transport/driving**

Many young people YNOT have consulted with have fears of or are not confident in using public transport (Tasmanian Youth Forum, 2010). YNOT agree with the *Draft Transport Access Strategy*, which states that travel planning can and should be utilised by schools and other educational institutions to ensure that students are able to travel safely, sustainably and affordably as well as manage issues such as traffic movement and parking demands around their institutions (Department of State Growth, 2016). These issues can have adverse effects on young people such as being late to school, being late to work or being late to an appointment. An integrative approach early on could improve a young person's confidence and reduce their anxiety in regards to using public transport. For example, in preparing young people for college in rural areas, public transport familiarisation could be done within the schools.

Many young people who participated in the Statewide Forum also brought up the issue of the lack of driver safety education in schools (Tasmanian Youth Forum, 2010). Some form of driving course or even seminars run by driving instructors would be beneficial to the learning and safety of particularly the senior secondary students.



## Conclusion

YNOT would like to thank the Department of State Growth for the opportunity to provide input into the Draft Transport Access Strategy and for providing the chance to voice the opinions of a diverse range of Tasmanian young people on an issue, which affects them significantly. YNOT's main concerns for young people are in regards to the cost of public transport and other reliable transport options, the need for public transport services to be aligned, access and equity of public transport, learning to drive private vehicles being the only viable means of transport for some young people, the need for more mechanisms of feedback, the issue of stigmatisation around public transport and drivers and the need for support for people using public transport. YNOT is keen to contribute to further consultation processes.

## References

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