

“OUT & ABOUT”

A TRANSPORT COORDINATION STUDY IN THE LA TROBE VALLEY

August 1998

**Julie Hind & John Hind
Larne Pty. Ltd.**

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Disclaimer

This report was prepared by Larne Pty Ltd as a product of the project – The Transport Co-ordination Study in the La Trobe Valley.

The purpose of the project was to develop a co-ordinated transport system for people in the La Trobe Valley who are “transport disadvantaged”. The report is not constrained by government policies or other planning or community goals, but provides an independent appraisal of how the delivery of community transport might be improved.

The views expressed in the report are the opinions of the consultants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Human Services, which provided the funding for the project, through the auspices of Cooinda Hill, Traralgon. The report has not been considered by government and therefore has no official status. The recommendations contained herein are made for the consideration of relevant organisations and government agencies, but are in no way binding upon them.

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We also appreciate the input of people external to the region who shared their experiences of providing transport to similar target groups.

A list of participants is provided in *Appendix 1*.

The managers of the 3 Adult Training Support Services are particularly thanked for their consistent support. Their willingness to look beyond a solution for their particular consumer group has been instrumental in enabling a more comprehensive model to be designed.

Julie Hind, John Hind, Jenny Donnelly and Judith Woodland – Larne Pty. Ltd.

Foreword

The focus of this project was on how to improve transport for people with disabilities, the frail aged and the carers of both groups. However, the final model has taken a broader view of transport. This came about for a number of reasons:

1. It was evident that other population groups in the La Trobe Valley experience similar transport needs. Other groups of people have little or no access to public transport, do not own a private vehicle, have insufficient finances or are isolated in outlying townships.
2. Several people representing these other community groups showed much interest in the idea of a broad community transport system and keenly participated in the project.
3. The commercial operators in The La Trobe Valley indicated a strong interest in the project and were important participants.
4. The research in to alternative models showed that although there are many successful examples of coordinated transport systems they generally focus on improving the services within the welfare sector, often for one particular target group. Many alternative models incorporate the use of services provided by the commercial sector, but the community transport and the commercial sector are generally not intrinsically integrated. Largely the community transport services remain segregated.

Through inclusive processes the project team was able to galvanise the broad interest shown. The project team was of the view that the La Trobe Valley is poised to implement a more comprehensive community transport service.

Consequently the model presented herein can be used broadly across the community, allowing other community groups to be added to the system, now, or in the future.

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Glossary of Terms

ADASS	Adult Day Activity Service – day services for aged people, funded through HACC
ATSS	Adult Training Support Services – day services for people with disabilities, aged between 16 and 65 years. The services are generally operated by non-government agencies with funding provided by the Department of Human Services
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act – A Commonwealth Act
DHS	Department of Human Services – State government department responsible for administering HACC and Disability Services
DOI	Department of Infrastructure – State government department responsible for administering public transport infrastructure and subsidies
EFT	Equivalent Full Time – Unit Cost measure used in ATSS funding formula
HACC	Home & Community Care - The HACC target group is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- People who are frail aged,- Younger people with disabilities, and- The carers of both these groups.
Mobility	The ability to get around
Mobility Allowance	A Commonwealth Allowance for people with disabilities who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Aged 16+ ,- Unable to use public transport, and- Undertaking volunteer work with a recognised community program &/or vocational training &/or employment for a minimum of 8 hours per week
Multi Purpose Taxi Program Subsidy Scheme (MPTP)	This is a subsidy scheme for people with severe, permanent disabilities that significantly restrict their mobility. It is a state government program that provides 50% discount on taxi fares (up to a maximum discount of \$25 per trip).

Transport Disadvantaged	<p>“Characteristics of the ‘transport disadvantaged’ may include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Age, disability, car ownership, income, Aboriginality, ethnicity and accessibility;- The need to address issues that recognise the rights of all people to move around their community; and- The inability of many people to use public transport due to structural issues or its absence. <p>Factors identifying transport disadvantage are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Spatial, supply, temporal, design and economic issues; and- The need to address community transport as a generic transport issue that is no longer limited to so called minorities.”¹
VPTAS	Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme
VTD	Victorian Taxi Directorate – responsible for administering the MPTP

¹ Ashby, J. et al, *Getting There: The Impact of Community Transport on the Home and Community Care Program and Service Users – Future Directions*, Villamanta Publishing Service Inc. June, 1997, pg. 66

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of the study was to develop a coordinated community transport system for people in the La Trobe Valley who are ‘transport disadvantaged’. The project brief placed particular emphasis on achieving more efficient and effective transport services for:

- People with disabilities who attend the three Adult Training Support Services (ATSS) in the shire, and
- The Home and Community Care (HACC) target group.

1.2. Background

The La Trobe Valley area has a number of Department of Human Services-funded disability and HACC programs that provide transport to enable people to access community services. In addition, several other community organisations in the La Trobe Valley also operate transport services.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) was concerned that each service runs independently of each other, that there is no formalised or coordinated approach between organisations and that each has strict eligibility criteria that often precludes people in need of transport. The department was also concerned that, despite significant amounts of resources being directed into transport by several organisations, many people in the La Trobe Valley remain transport disadvantaged.

DHS provided funds for a transport study to be undertaken. The major outcomes sought from the project were:

- The coordination of existing resources, and
- A service model for transport that:
 - Attends to the needs of the transport disadvantaged,
 - Operates across the local government area, and
 - Promotes co-operative and coordinated service development between groups.

Cooinda Hill ATSS, as the auspicing agency, contracted Larne Pty. Ltd. to conduct the project. The project team was accountable to a steering committee made up of representatives from the three ATSSs and DHS. The La Trobe Valley Shire was invited to participate in the steering committee but was unable to take up the offer.

1.3. Study methodology

1.3.1. Service mapping

The service mapping comprised three components – DHS-funded agencies providing transport, other community agencies providing transport and commercial operators (buses and taxis).

The purpose of this mapping exercise was to:

- Inform the project team,
- Provide information around the current strengths and issues facing the various operators and their respective consumer groups,
- Identify service needs, and
- Explore possible opportunities.

Documentation of the services was not an intended output of the project because the Department of Infrastructure (DOI) has recently updated its comprehensive *Victorian Community Transport Directory*. The major community transport providers in the La Trobe Valley are listed in that directory, along with details about availability, eligibility, cost, and so forth.

1.3.2. Consultation

Broad consultation was undertaken with service providers, consumers, advocacy groups and government departments. A number of strategies were employed including interviews, focus groups and workshops.

1.3.3. Exploration of models

The exploration of models occurred using a two-stage approach:

The first included,

- A literature review,
- Discussion with co-ordinators of community transport systems elsewhere,
- Exploration of the legal implications of alternative models, and
- An assessment of the volunteer infrastructure in the La Trobe Valley and its capacity to input to any future model.

The second,

- A workshop with a range of people with an interest in the future transport service in the shire, and
- Discussion and refinement of the proposed model with the steering committee.

2. The La Trobe Valley

2.1. Location of the Shire

The La Trobe Shire² was created on 2 December 1994 with the amalgamation of the Cities of Moe, Morwell and Traralgon, the Shire of Traralgon and parts of the Shires of Rosedale and Narracan.

The Shire is a part of the Gippsland region of Victoria and is situated about 150 kilometres east of Melbourne on the Princes highway. The main rail line running from Melbourne to Sale passes through the La Trobe Valley. This line services both passenger and freight. Scheduled air flights from Sydney and Tasmania access “The Valley” via Traralgon airport.

The Princes Highway runs through the centre of The La Trobe Valley. Situated on this corridor are the main centres of Moe, Morwell, Traralgon and Churchill.

To the north the shire extends past the rural area of Toongabbie to the foothills of the Great Dividing Range whilst to the south past the rural towns of Yinnar and Boolarra to the Strazlecki Ranges.

2.2. Population

The shire has four main districts – Moe & districts, Morwell & districts, Traralgon & districts and the rural districts.

The population as at June 1996 was 67,454.³

Age group	Number	%	Regional Vic. %
0-4	5487	8.1	7.4
5-17	14,446	21.4	20.7
18-24	6743	10.0	8.7
25-34	9830	14.6	13.5
35-49	15,212	22.6	22.3
50-59	6236	9.2	10.0
60-69	4553	6.7	8.2
70-84	4403	6.5	8.0
85+	544	0.8	1.3
Total	67,454	100.0	100.0

The Shire has four large town centres and seven smaller towns. This configuration makes the La Trobe Shire significantly different to other municipalities in rural Victoria where most of the new municipalities are based around one main centre.

² The majority of this information was sourced from the Shire’s Web Page

³ Department of Infrastructure, 1997, *Victoria In Fact, Interim Report*, pg. 120

Figure 2: Towns and populations in the La Trobe Shire⁴

Boolarra	605
Churchill	5,581
Glengarry	990
Moe	10,063
Morwell	15,411
Newborough	6,643
Toongabbie	741
Traralgon	19,744
Tyers	208
Yallourn North	1,266
Yinnar	513

La Trobe Shire is the third largest municipality outside metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong.

2.3. Transport

Some small rural hamlets are quite isolated from the main corridor. There is very little public transport in these areas, if any at all.

2.3.1. Rail

V/Line runs trains, buses, or combination of both from Melbourne through the La Trobe Valley to Traralgon each week.

On week days there are 11 services per day. There are 5 Saturday services and 3 Sunday services.

As well as the services from Melbourne there are bus services to Traralgon from Warragul (2), Drouin (1) and Garfield (1).

Unlike many V/Line country services this particular line provides a commuter service throughout the La Trobe Valley. Many travellers use this service to travel from one La Trobe Valley town to another. It was not possible to quantify the number of travellers because V/Line was unable to release figures.

2.3.2. Bus

The La Trobe Valley Bus Company has a large fleet of 60 buses, providing passenger services within each of the main centres of Moe, Morwell and Traralgon. It also runs inter city buses that connect each of these 3 main centres. Inter city services also connect with Newborough, Mirboo North, Boolarra and Yallourn North.

⁴ Based on 1991 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data

The inter city routes include:

- Moe, Newborough, Morwell, Traralgon – 11 buses on weekdays and 6 on Saturdays until 1:10 p.m.
- Mirboo North, Boolarra, Morwell – Thursday only at 10 a.m. and 2.25 p.m.
- Yallourn North, Newborough, Moe – 3 on weekdays in the morning, with 2 return journeys.
- Morwell, Churchill – This service has 3 routes. The first - 9 on a weekdays, 4 on Friday nights and 6 on Saturday morning. The second - 3 buses per day. The third, (during the university semester only) operates on Sundays, Mondays and on long weekends, plus 2 evening buses to co-ordinate with V/Line rains.

A bus each hour between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. goes past the new hospital campus daily Monday – Friday and on Saturday morning. At the time of writing only one of these called into the actual hospital campus. All others stopped at a rest stop on the freeway.

2.3.3. Taxi services

- *Traralgon* has a fleet of 12 vehicles, 2 of which are M50 (Multi Purpose Taxis).
- *Moe Blue & White Taxi Service* – 5 vehicles, 1 of which is M50.
- *Moe City Taxis* – 6 vehicles.
- *Morwell* has 12 vehicles, 1 of which is M50
- *Churchill* has 3 vehicles, 1 of which is M50.

3. Community Transport in the La Trobe Valley

3.1. What is community transport?

To date, in the La Trobe Valley, community transport has been the term used to refer to transport services operated by several not-for-profit organisations, community groups or local government for specific populations such as the frail aged and people with disabilities or other groups with limited transport options.

The Department of Infrastructure recently updated its *Victorian Community Transport Directory*. The major community transport providers in the La Trobe Valley are listed in that directory, along with details about availability, eligibility, cost, and so forth. Copies of this directory are available from the Department of Infrastructure, and also from the Shire.

Generally, community transport in the La Trobe Valley is provided to enable access to other services operated by the agency. For example an ATSS might transport a client to a day service program, the Community Health Service might provide transport to a hydrotherapy session, the Shire might provide an elderly person with transport to the library.

In some instances the transport is provided to enable people to access social activities or attend medical appointments. For example, Red Cross assists people to attend the doctor or hospital.

Community transport in the La Trobe Valley might be provided on a scheduled basis or on demand and is usually a door-to-door service. It is provided to meet local or specialised transport needs. Some organisations employ drivers, whilst others use volunteer drivers. Users usually contribute via a small donation or nominal fee.

3.2. Community transport provided by the agencies central to this project

3.2.1. Coinda Hill ATSS

Cooinda Hill, based in Traralgon, is a day service for people with disabilities. It has a number of campuses in Traralgon and another in Morwell.

The agency provides transport for the majority of its consumers to and from its main Traralgon centre, using a combination of agency-owned buses and contracts with the local taxi operator.

The agency's 3 small buses seat between 7-12 and one is able to take a wheelchair. These buses are driven by paid drivers. The bus routes cover Traralgon South, Yallourn North, Glengarry, Morwell, Churchill, Boolarra, Moe and Traralgon.

The agency also owns 8 vehicles used to transport consumers to programs during the day. These include mini buses, station wagons, small trucks and sedans.

Consumers are charged a fee of \$1 per day.

The level of the agency's expenditure on transport is very significant.

A member of staff co-ordinates the transport service part time.

3.2.2. Moe Life Skills ATSS

Moe Life Skills is a day service for people with disabilities. It is based within the central business district and close to public facilities.

The agency contracts a local taxi company to provide the transport from home to the Centre for those consumers unable to travel independently. The Centre charges \$1 per trip.

Many consumers use the local bus, which serves the Centre well. Some consumers walk or ride their bicycles. Some of the consumers commute from Morwell, Mirboo North and Trafalgar.

The agency owns 3 vehicles for program purposes. None has been modified for wheelchairs. Some consumers require assistance to access these programs. They are not charged for this travel.

The level of expenditure on transport, as a percentage of the agency's Unit Cost, is within an expected range.

A member of staff co-ordinates the transport part time.

3.2.3. Scope Disability Services

Scope Disability Services is based in Morwell, providing three services for people with disabilities:

- La Trobe Valley Futures – an ATSS providing services in Morwell, Moe, and Traralgon.
- A region-wide respite service.
- An Adult Day Activity Support Service (ADASS) focusing on recreational and social support.

Transport to and from the Morwell centre occurs either independent of the agency via bus, taxis, train or private vehicles driven by carers, or through a vehicle 'run' operated by the agency. The agency's transport route covers Moe, Trafalgar, Morwell, Glengarry, Churchill and Traralgon.

Some taxi contracts have been negotiated to replace agency-operated 'runs'.

The agency owns 3 vehicles for the use in the disability programs – a van, a sedan and a Ute. These vehicles are used for commuting and program purposes.

A member of staff co-ordinates the transport part time. Instructional staff are deployed to drive the commuting ‘runs’, resulting in a reduction of available preparation time.

3.2.4. La Trobe Community Health Service

Adult Day Activity Services:

La Trobe Community Health Service is funded through HACC to provide Adult day Activity Service (ADASS) programs for the frail aged and people with disabilities in Moe and Morwell.

The ADASS programs have 3 vehicles attached to them, 1 in Moe and 2 in Morwell. They are used for providing transport to and from the activity centres as well as to assist people access hydrotherapy.

Consumers pay \$1 - \$1.50 per day. The buses are driven by volunteer drivers who are accompanied by volunteer ‘jockeys’.

Community transport service:

This service is funded and operated by La Trobe Community Health Service. Volunteers provide the transport using their own vehicles. The service is available between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. for health related appointments. A small fee is charged to reimburse drivers, e.g., \$4 around Morwell, \$7 for a trip from Morwell to Traralgon.

Dialysis transport:

This is a service jointly funded and operated with La Trobe Regional Health Services providing patient transport to and from hospital.

3.2.5. La Trobe Shire

La Trobe Shire is funded through HACC to provide an ADASS program for the frail aged and people with disabilities.

The program has 1 bus attached to it for providing transport to and from the activity centre. It is also used to provide a ‘fixed run’ from outlying areas each fortnight to bring people in to the library. It has wheelchair lift. Volunteers drive the bus.

The Shire also owns a bus that is used for its Youth Services. This vehicle is also made available to community groups on a hire & drive basis.

3.3. Other community transport available in the shire

Several other agencies operate community transport within the shire. The following list is provided as a sample only.

- Red Cross – 1 vehicle for short-term transport assistance to urgent medical appointments and tests. Volunteers drive the vehicle.
- Salvation Army – 1 vehicle without wheelchair access, available to the general community when not in use by the Salvation Army.
- Quantum Community Care – vehicles are used mainly for the people who use the agency's accommodation services.
- Central Gippsland Aboriginal Health & Housing Co-op. Ltd. has 1 bus and 2 cars attached to its health service. Drivers are employed to transport people to and from medical appointments. It also has 1 car attached to its childcare centre. Childcare staff transport children to and from the centre.

3.4. The strengths of the current situation

The strengths of the current situation in the La Trobe Valley fall into two broad categories:

3.4.1. Community transport specific

These strengths are shared with other community transport services and include:

- The services are often more responsive to the needs of individuals than conventional public transport is able. Most provide a door-to-door service at a very reasonable rate. An important part of the role of drivers and assistants is to provide social contact and support to the consumers.
- Community transport supplements public transport. Community transport is able to provide a service where public transport cannot and as such contributes to a more comprehensive transport service system.
- It is local in nature. Usually it is operated by local organisations that understand the needs of the local people. It is a service with which people can identify as a local community service, as being part of their community.
- It provides a service for people whose access to the community by regular means is limited by their age, disability, level of resources, specific travel needs or geographic location. Many of these people require a more customised transport service, e.g. door-to-door at a reasonable cost.

3.4.2. La Trobe Valley specific

A number of strengths specific to the La Trobe Valley were identified, although some of these strengths might also be features of community transport services elsewhere.

- Many people are supported through the various community transport services. Several agencies operate community transport for a range of purposes. Although this project did not set out to quantify the numbers of people using community transport, the number would be significant. According to the 1996 census there were 4938 people aged 70+ living in La Trobe Shire. As at June 1997, 2448 people in the La Trobe Shire were in receipt of the Disability Support Pension. Many people in these two groups would be eligible for the community transport services.
- Vehicles are used frequently during peak times, 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.
- The relationship between taxi drivers and people in the target group is reported to be good. Favourable comments came from consumers, taxi operators and agencies who contract taxis to transport their consumers.
- Taxi operators have received training in how to assist people with disabilities and the frail aged.
- There is willingness by most community transport providers, consumer advocacy groups, bus and taxi operators and relevant government departments to find a community-wide solution to presenting issues. Representatives from a broad range of organisations and community interests participated in this project in a positive way.
- There is a good volunteer infrastructure and culture in the La Trobe Valley on which to build an improved community transport system. Refer to the information provided in chapter 4 – The use of volunteers.

3.5. Emerging issues

3.5.1. Issues relating to consumers

- The users of the existing community transport services are dependent upon others for their transport. For example, many people with disabilities will not own or be able to drive a vehicle, aged people may be too frail or disabled to drive, many people are on limited fixed incomes and are unable to afford their own transport.
- Many of the users of community transport also face difficulties with mobility - the physical ability to move about. For example, many need assistance on and off a vehicle, or help to 'navigate' timetables, or require personal care on a lengthy train or bus trip, and so forth.

- There is little or no community transport available after hours and on weekends. Many people are therefore not able to access community facilities, participate in recreational pursuits, and so forth. This lack of transport will often further exacerbate the social isolation that many people experience.
- Affordability of transport is a critical issue. Many users and potential users of community transport have limited, fixed incomes. Many do not have access to the Multi Purpose Taxi Program Subsidy Scheme (MPTP) or a Mobility Allowance from Centrelink, both of which help offset the cost of transport.
- Increasing numbers of people with disabilities and older people with frailties now remain living in the community. This has increased the demand for transport support.
- People with disabilities and the frail aged are but two groups who are often transport disadvantaged. Other such groups, who have limited or no access to community transport, include youths, single parents, people on very low incomes.
- Some people on low incomes move to cheaper housing in the outlying areas that have poor access to transport routes.

3.5.2. Issues relating to community transport providers

- There is a very strong interdependence between community service programs and transport. Without access to affordable transport that operates door-to-door, many people would not be able to access needed services.
- Transport is not a core function of these community organisations, yet, for many, it represents a significant proportion of their budget and demands staffing resources for the purpose of coordination. This can result in fewer resources being available for activities that fall within the core business.
- Each agency dedicates resources to the coordination of their transport services. This is likely to result in some duplication of efforts, e.g. negotiating contracts with taxi operators, recruitment of volunteer drivers, administration support.
- Coordination is generally done by a staff member as an additional task to an existing role, and not as a dedicated role. Some agencies do not include these staffing costs when calculating the cost of operating the transport because the coordination is only one duty of the staff member. Consequently, there is a risk that some of the transport costs are hidden.
- For some agencies, significant attention to a non-core function has also resulted in some consumers and their families expecting the agency to solve their transport problems.

- Some of the agencies that provide community transport have done so for many years. Consumers and their families have come to expect the service. For some agencies, several people's employment relies on the transport service. Any changes to the way in which transport is currently provided might therefore be threatening.
- Across the shire there are many community transport vehicles, most of which sit idle after hours and during weekends – precisely at the time when people are currently in need of transport. Although most agencies have offered their vehicles to other community groups during these 'down' times, few offers have been taken up. There appear to be several reasons for this, including a perception by agencies that there are major insurance and legal issues and the lack of capacity for any single organisation to co-ordinate such additional usage. The situation relating to an agency's insurance and legal liabilities are described in the next section of this chapter.
- Community service providers have a responsibility to ensure their programs are accessible. Transport is a critical enabling factor. Without transport, access to community services would be further limited. In the past, most agencies have translated this responsibility in to actual provision of transport. This has resulted in problems being solved at an individual agency level rather than at a community-wide level. Transport is a critical community infrastructure and should be solved as such.
- Many of the community transport routes and times overlap, suggesting a need for coordination and resource sharing. This is particularly so for agencies that operate inter city. For example the 3 ATSSs each draws consumers from anywhere in the La Trobe Valley. This provides consumers with needed choice of program but because each agency operates its transport separately, they have routes that overlap. A sharing of resources and a coordination of effort would result in improved efficiencies and possibly some improved outcomes for consumers.
- A number of the agencies use volunteer drivers. Comprehensive volunteer training and support and practice guidelines are not always in place to support these volunteers.
- Some agencies would like their consumers to learn to be more independent in their use of transport. Increased use of the available public transport is seen as a potential way for this to occur. However, many community agency program times and public transport timetables do not currently suit each other. In addition, some of these consumers have the need to be physically supported but the agency might not have the resources.
- For the ATSSs some valuable program time is lost because of transport 'double handling'. For example, at present, many consumers are transported to the agency's building then are transported to another venue for their actual program.

A coordinated approach between agencies and commercial operators might alleviate some or all of this.

- Community transport providers have a common law liability. This liability is described in the next section of this chapter.

3.5.3. Issues relating to the commercial sector

- Increasing numbers of community transport services are a potential threat to the livelihoods of companies in the La Trobe Valley that provide bus and taxi services.
- There is a perception that the commercial operators especially taxis are too expensive for people who are ‘transport disadvantaged’ and so these resources are often not used. The commercial operators believe that, as a result, they are an underutilised resource in the community. They believe they are able to offer a greater level of flexibility than is commonly perceived. There are, nonetheless, legislative and operational constraints placed upon taxi operators that inhibit a more extensive use of their services. The Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) is currently investigating options, particularly for rural areas.
- There is a perception that the commercial sector does not cater for the transport disadvantaged despite the reality that 90% of La Trobe Valley Bus Lines’ patronage is concession and about 30% of taxi patronage is MPTP.
- There is a perception by community transport providers that the bus company is reluctant to alter its timetables when, often, the company is constrained by timetables over which it has no control, for example the need co-ordinate with trains.
- Modification to buses has enormous resource implications. As well as the initial outlay there is an ongoing cost related to loss of fares because seats have been removed to allow wheelchairs.
- Buses in the La Trobe Valley have to be multi purpose, for example, access to the community during the day but a school bus before and after school.

3.5.4. Issues relating to the system

- The ‘entry’ points to community transport are not always visible. Some people do not know how to access what is available.
- Community transport is currently viewed as a welfare issue rather than as a community infrastructure issue. As a consequence, individual agencies try to solve the problems of access for their separate consumer groups.

- Many groups of people who are transport disadvantaged do not have access to the extensive community transport that operates in the La Trobe Valley because they do not fit the restrictive target group eligibility.
- Guidelines and eligibility are not consistent across state and commonwealth. This can lead to issues for commercial operators. For example, there are 15 different concession cards with which operators must be familiar.
- There are currently very few co-operative arrangements between community transport agencies. Any cooperation that does exist is usually restricted to day-to-day issues and not related to strategic planning and policy to improve the overall system. There is scope for further cooperation at an operational level between agencies operating in the same towns, e.g. an ATSS with a HACC-funded agency, as well as between agencies within the same service sector, e.g. the 3 ATSSs. Joint approaches to transport are likely to result in improved use of resources, e.g. one staff member to co-ordinate rather than multiple, one point of negotiation for taxi contracts, minimisation of duplicate routes.
- There are still remnants of parochial perspectives in the three major towns of the La Trobe Valley that have, to date, hindered shire-wide solutions.
- The community transport services largely concentrate on transport, that is getting people from *A* to *B*, and less on issues of mobility. For example, community transport providers are not always able to provide the personal care or personal assistance that might be required. Nor do they input to community infrastructure such as the state of footpaths, the placing of crossings and the placing of billboards on footpaths.

3.5.5. Issues relating to government departments

- No single government department has the mandate for the issue of transport for the transport disadvantaged and therefore a coordinated approach to planning is essential. However, there is currently little joint planning between DHS, DOI and the Shire around transport and its critical role in the social and community life of people in the La Trobe Valley.
- Government departments face increasing pressure to provide additional funding for transport yet they work within finite resources. There is therefore a need to solve this increased demand through improved use of the existing resources.

3.6. Legal and insurance requirements⁵

3.6.1. The Federal Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), 1992

This Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a disability in such areas as employment, education and in getting or using services. These include

⁵ The following information has been sourced from Ashby et al, op.cit. pp 73-75

“services relating to transport or travel and services of the kind provided by government, a government authority or a local government body”. In Victoria it is also unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of age.

3.6.2. The Standards

In 1996 the “Accessible Public Transport Standards” were adopted by the federal Attorney General. These standards specify how public transport must be made accessible to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the basis of disability.

The Standards describe the range of disabilities covered by the DDA and all the requirements to ensure access and equity. These include areas like design, fittings, waiting area spaces, surfaces and infrastructure. The Standards allow a phased compliance over a 20-year period.

3.6.3. Common Law Liability

Community transport providers have legal obligations under common law in the area of negligence if there is a breach of duty of care where the breach of duty has caused injury, psychological damage or loss.

Under the Trades Practices Act 1974 (Commonwealth), if a person is injured as a result of unsafe or defective goods s/he has the right of compensation.

There are ramifications relating to vehicles that have been converted for community transport use. Common Law principles embrace concepts of ‘reasonable fitness for the purpose’. Conflicting issues may be raised in respect of the responsibility for wheelchair restraint and upon those who convert the vehicles. The modifications must, at the very least, meet the Australian Standards AS2942.

In the case of accidents in Victoria, where an accident occurs whilst the vehicle is being driven then the owner or driver of the vehicle is entitled to indemnity from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC).

However in the case of an injury not being the result of a ‘transport accident’, for example, a wheelchair dropping to the ground because of a failure in the hoist mechanism, the injured person would have rights of action against:

- The owner of the vehicle;
- The driver;
- The manufacturer of the lift or hoist;
- The installer;
- The person who modified the vehicle;
- Or all of the above.

3.6.4. Insurance

There appears to be two main insurance-related issues. The first is that the insurance policy may not allow people other than those directly associated with the organisation to drive the vehicle. The second relates to the payment of insurance policy excess and no claim bonuses in the event of an accident.

In New South Wales the Community Transport Organisation, an incorporated body comprised of registered members who provide community transport has the status to negotiate appropriate insurance policies on behalf of its members.

In Victoria, insurance brokers are now negotiating within individual community transport agencies.

3.6.5. Cost Recovery

Generally community transport services need to implement some level of fee for service as a means of recovering some of the costs of running the vehicles. Vic Roads Licencing Procedures (1994) make it illegal for vehicles without commercial licences to carry passengers for hire or reward. Payments may be made for part of a total service. Attempts by community transport services to charge anything other than a nominal fee or donation could place them in breach of the state regulations.

4. Preferred attributes of a future community transport service

4.1. Attributes identified by participants

As part of the exploration of potential models, people with a key interest participated in a workshop to consider the issues and possible solutions. At this workshop, participants identified several preferred attributes they wanted included in a future community transport system for the La Trobe Valley. These are categorised as:

Responsive

- The service to be needs-based
- The service to be available on a 24 hour basis
- Flexibility in design and delivery
- Accessible infrastructure & vehicles
- A service that is safe for client & operator
- Ongoing system development, that includes ongoing consultation, so that the system remains responsive

Integrated

- Integrated – community and commercial sectors working collaboratively
- A strong commitment from people & agencies participating in the model to work collaboratively

Coordinated

- A central point of coordination
- A capacity for regular updated audits of available resources
- An ongoing marketing & advertising strategy

Use of volunteers

- The use of volunteers in some aspects of the service because of the real value they can add.

4.2. How viable are these attributes?

Table 1: Responsive

Aspect	Comments
The service to be needs-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the models that operate elsewhere have eligibility guidelines. Many permit a broader use of the service, especially in non-peak times and usually at a higher ‘donation’ rate. • The future model needs to have capacity to provide services how and when people need them. An after-hours & weekend capacity will be critical. Some regular analysis of needs and a review of the service’s performance in meeting those needs will be essential, followed by appropriate changes.
The service to be available on a 24 hour basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The services explored via the literature review and model exploration generally operate Monday to Friday. Some of the UK models operate on Saturdays as well. • The need for a community transport service after hours and on weekends was expressed consistently during this project. A focus on meeting these needs, as a priority of any future model in La Trobe Valley would result in improved access and outcomes. • Taxis are able to provide a 24-hour response. Protocols with the Victorian Taxi Directorate and local operators might result in this aspect being successfully met.
Accessible infrastructure & vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good coordination of the full range of vehicles available in the La Trobe valley would provide better accessibility. Within the shire there is a diverse range of vehicles, including conventional buses, mini buses, multi purpose taxis, vehicles with hoists, sedans, etc. • The experience of <i>Ovens & King Community Managed Transport</i> points to the need for well negotiated written agreements between agencies owning the vehicles and the coordinating agency in relation to such things as repairs, insurance, vehicle turnover, responsibilities, reimbursements, etc. • Ashby et al provides a list of solutions outlined by Dr. Sandra Rosenbloom, Professor of Planning, University of Arizona – a world expert on transport planning. One of the solutions is making neighbourhoods more pedestrian friendly.

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Aspect	Comments
Flexibility in design and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One example of a 24-hour social support role undertaken by a taxi service is <i>Swan Hill Taxi Service</i>. It provides a 24-hour communication and transport system and operates “with social support principles as part of the service and drivers are expected to carry out these support roles (for example, assist people to the car and their appointment, bring in the washing if needed etc.) The additional time to complete these support tasks is not charged for and is seen as fundamental to building a viable taxi service in rural areas.”⁶ • TBA Planners et al noted that consumer based models might be appropriate for isolated rural towns. This model would allocate funding directly to the consumer to purchase transport from neighbours, family members etc. They cite examples of consumer-based models already in existence as the Department of Social Security Mobility Allowance for people with disabilities and the Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) • A number of the models that operate elsewhere include a brokerage-type component, i.e. the coordinator negotiates transport responses that are the most appropriate to the consumer’s needs. Ashby et al report on a study by Taylor, Lightfoot Transport Consultants in the UK in 1993. That study found that brokerage schemes are most successful if they have some purchasing power. • Community transport schemes often include a range of options, e.g. the UK <i>Preston Community Transport</i> offers a “Shopmobility Service” – a scheme that provides manual & electrically powered wheelchairs & scooters to help people who have limited mobility to shop & enjoy the town’s facilities. It also offers a “Dial-a-Bus Service” – a door to door bus service that follows a form of route & timetable, similar to those services provided by licensed clubs in NSW. • A number of participants in this project suggested a system that included fixed-route taxis and the use of regular community transport loops that connected with buses and trains

⁶ TBA Planners et al, *Home and Community Care Transport Strategy in Loddon Mallee*, May 1998, pg. 61

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Aspect	Comments
<p>A service that is safe for client & operator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “HACC guidelines state “Any vehicle modification must comply with the relevant Australian Standards (AS292, AS3856 & AS3954), as set by Standards Australia, the Standards for registration and any other relevant design standards.” Drivers must have a current licence & vehicles must be comprehensively insured and roadworthy. Cars are required to have seat belts and air conditioning must be fitted in all vehicles used to transport HACC consumers. Seat belts are encouraged in community transport buses.”⁷ • Training of volunteers is essential. Volunteer drivers and assistants in <i>Northern Care and Share</i> receive training in first aid, defensive driving techniques, the correct use of mobility aids and in assisting people in and out of vehicles.⁸ • <i>Wodonga Community Managed Transport</i> volunteer drivers also receive defensive driving training. • Private bus companies face strict safety requirements, some of which might be suitable for inclusion into a future model, e.g., not accepting drivers over a certain age, frequent medical tests for older drivers, etc. • Policies & procedures around Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) and client safety are critical. • A police check of volunteers is essential.
<p>Ongoing system development, that includes ongoing consultation, so that the system remains responsive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most models elsewhere indicate a role for the coordinators in continuing to improve the community transport service. Most appear to focus on improved coordination & networking between participating agencies. There was little, or no evidence that other models focused on the systemic issues, i.e. those related to affecting the structures, policies and practices. These ‘systems’ issues can often result in further transport disadvantage. A critical role of the coordinator in any future La Trobe Valley model should include responsibility to address systemic issues, in conjunction with relevant government bodies and service providers.

⁷ Ashby et al , *Getting There – The Impact of Community Transport on the Home and Community Care Program and Service Users: Future Directions*, Villamanta Publishing, June 1997, pg. 75

⁸ Ibid pg. 89

Table 2: Integrated

Aspect	Comments
Integrated – community and commercial sectors working collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>SunAssist</i> in Mildura receives funding from HACC, Department of Infrastructure and community donations.⁹ • A taxi service operating in Corangamite Shire “has been delivering community transport for the same remuneration as the reimbursement fee for volunteer drivers, i.e. at a rate of 58.3 cents per km. The taxi operator has found that the overall business in a small town like Camperdown has increased significantly.”¹⁰ • Taxi operators in the La Trobe Valley currently provide contracted services to some disability service agencies and special schools. • L.T.V. Bus Co. currently provides some ‘good neighbour’ services, e.g. significant reduction on price to some community groups.
A strong commitment from people & agencies participating in the model to work collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & commercial sectors in the La Trobe Valley have indicated a commitment to work collaboratively on a future model. • A critical role of the coordinator would be to liaise with participating organisations, providing them with information & support and negotiating relevant & well thought out arrangements that are regularly reviewed from all perspectives.

⁹ TBA Planners Pty. Ltd. et al, op. Cit., May 1998, pg. 59

¹⁰ Ibid pg. 60

Table 3: Coordinated

Aspect	Comments
A central point of coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research of models in Australia and overseas strongly supports the benefits of coordination. Ashby et al found in their extensive literature review that a well-coordinated service results in “improved accessibility, financial and time savings, improved service quality and the opportunity for centralised vehicle management/control.”¹¹ • Paid co-ordinators are a feature of many of the community transport programs. TBA Planners Pty. Ltd. outlined the role of a transport co-ordinator as¹²: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing a system for tracking costs associated with transport provision - Establish process for management and administration of community transport system - Develop and maintain liaison with other providers so as to maximise cooperation - Determine eligibility for HACC transport - Broker the best transport deal for the consumer - Update and maintain community and voluntary transport directory - Co-ordinate voluntary transport systems - Maintain information about public transport systems - Maximise the relationship between public transport, taxis and community transport to minimise duplication of vehicles and maximise use of resources - Establish formal communication links with all transport providers i.e. taxis, public transport, private services. • <i>Ashby et al</i> reported findings of a 1993 UK study by Taylor & Lightfoot that describes the role of the co-ordinator as critical. The required skills include negotiating skills, technical expertise and the ability to handle complex budget allocations. • <i>Central Wellington Health Service</i> has a central booking transport database funded by HACC, co-ordinating a fleet that is managed by local committees at 5 locations. • <i>O & K CMT</i> and <i>Wodonga CMT</i> co-ordinate commuting and program related transport for people with disabilities whose day services are purchased via <i>O & K Service Brokerage</i> and <i>Community Options Brokerage Service</i>, respectively. These 2 services, funded via the disability day services Unit Cost system, contribute \$1,000 per EFT (equivalent full time position) to the CMT services. This is a recurrent contribution. • <i>Wodonga CMT</i> has recently developed a computer database that includes, among other things a total booking system, statistical collection, tracking of client donations, volunteer hours & passenger trips, daily print outs @ driver, @ vehicle, @ day, etc. The system will soon be available for purchase at a cost of \$2,000, which will include training. (Travel for trainer is additional)

¹¹ Ashby, J et al, op. Cit., June 1997, pg. 43

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Aspect	Comments
A capacity for regular updated audits of available resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows that this is a role of co-ordinators. • The Department of Infrastructure maintains a directory of all community transport services. • As part of the Upper Hume Best Practice Transport Project an <i>Upper Hume Community Transport Directory</i> was developed. This is print-based directory. • The <i>Northern Care and Share</i> service has created a centralised computer database of available community resources. Information includes vehicle, driver availability, costs, hiring/lending policies & contact addresses and telephone numbers. It anticipates, in the future, to provide a more detailed database of the usage patterns of vehicles & their routes, stored using a Geographic Information System (GIS). • OzTrack in Ballarat is a world leader in GIS.
An ongoing marketing & advertising strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several overseas systems advertise on the Internet via a Home Page. • A marketing strategy would be an essential early objective for the co-ordinator of any future model in La Trobe valley.

¹² TBA Planners Pty. Ltd. et al, op. Cit., May 1998, pg. 57

Table 4: The use of volunteers

Aspect	Comments
<p>The use of volunteers in some aspects of the service because of the real value they can add.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many community transport initiatives that operate elsewhere use volunteers, mainly as drivers. Examples include, <i>Northern Care and Share</i> in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, <i>Wodonga Community Managed Transport</i> and <i>Ovens & King Community Managed Transport</i> in North East Victoria and <i>SunAssist</i> in Mildura. • The La Trobe Valley has a strong culture of volunteering and existing infrastructures on which to build. The Shire employs staff to operate a Volunteer Centre. Their role is to recruit, train, refer volunteers as well as support agencies that use volunteers. The La Trobe Community Health Service also employs staff to co-ordinate a volunteer program. Their volunteer program has operated for 15 years. • However, each agency in “The Valley” generally recruits and trains its own volunteers. Some agencies, such as the ATSSs have difficulty in attracting volunteers. This is most likely because they do not have resources dedicated to the recruitment, training and support of volunteers. • Successful volunteer programs require an appropriate supportive infrastructure. It is critical to have capacity & ability to recruit appropriate people, provide initial and ongoing training, support the volunteers on an ongoing basis and reimburse out-of-pocket expenses. Volunteer programs should be organisationally supported via clear, relevant policies and procedures. • Ashby et al cites a further solution described by Dr. Rosenbloom (mentioned above) – support volunteers and voluntary options. • Some 63 organisations in “The Valley” use volunteers, of which 48 are listed in <i>Latrobe Valley Volunteer Resource Guide 1997</i>, prepared and distributed by La Trobe Shire. Several of these provide volunteer support to people who have a disability or to people who are elderly. Some provide volunteer transport, several provide social and/or personal support and several provide volunteer training. An example of these is provided in the next table.

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Table 5: Organisations that provide volunteer support in the La Trobe Valley¹³

Organisation	Disabilities	Elderly	Personal or social support	Volunteer drivers	Training
Anglicare	*		*	*	*
Connections	*		*		*
Court Network			*		*
Creative House	*			*	*
Gippsland Aids Support Group			*	*	*
Gippsland Citizen Advocacy Group	*		*		*
Gippsland Recreation Integration Program	*		*		*
Headway Gippsland Inc.	*		*		*
Kilmany Family Care			*		*
Latrobe Community Health Service	*	*	*	*	
La Trobe Shire Community Volunteer Program		*	*	*	*
La Trobe Helping Hand Association	*				
Latrobe Valley Palliative Care Service Inc.			*		*
Lifeline Gippsland Inc.			*		*
Migrant Resource Centre		*	*		*
Moe & District Meals on Wheels		*			
Parent Support Centre Gippsland			*		*
Technical Aid to the Disabled	*				
Visiting Pets Program Inc.		*	*		*

¹³ Information adapted from Hammond, Lesley, *Latrobe Valley Volunteer Resource Guide 1997*, La Trobe Shire,

5. An integrated community transport system model

5.1. Transport as an issue of infrastructure

Transport is required by all members of the community. Access to transport is a crucial means of accessing required services. It is a crucial means of participating in the life of the community.

The underlying paradigm of the model views transport as primarily an issue of infrastructure, not a welfare issue. Transport is as an enabler. It is a necessary part of a community's overall infrastructure. In considering transport the following questions should be asked. *Does the community have sufficient and appropriate forms of infrastructure to enable its citizens to actively participate in the total life of the community?*

5.2. Features of the model

The model is an integrated, coordinated *system*. The system is made up of a number of services that are connected via written agreements or contracts. The model has 5 key features:

1. Integrated
2. Community focused
3. Transport & mobility
4. Coordinated
5. Systems change

5.2.1. Integrated

A focus on community infrastructure rather than welfare results in a different emphasis than the one that currently exists. At present in the La Trobe Valley, transport for people with disabilities, the frail aged and the carers of both groups is viewed as a welfare issue. Some people within the target group will, from time to time, access the public transport system and the taxi services. However, primarily their transport needs that are directly related to accessing a service such as day centre, are met by the service organisations they wish to access. Their transport needs that relate to social activities largely go unmet.

Transport for the target group remains largely segregated, sitting outside the generic transport service frameworks.

Focusing on transport as an issue of community infrastructure leads to an emphasis on the use of the existing public transport and taxi services and developing strategies to improve, build upon and complement these.

The model emphasises the need to integrate the transport services. Integration is encouraged through:

- Development of a culture that views community transport as complementing commercial transport, not replacing it; hence a decision to use public transport and taxi services as the first option
- Representatives of the commercial operators on the Community Transport Reference Group
- Inclusion of a service development role in the central coordination function to ensure joint planning and problem solving.
- Development of a culture in the La Trobe Valley that emphasises a community-wide responsibility for solving issues related to transport.
- Potential for commercial operators to tender and operate components of the community transport system e.g., The Fleet Management Service.
- Potential for developing contracts or agreements with community organisations that operate transport services, e.g., Red Cross, etc.
- Potential for organisations skilled in the recruitment, training and support of volunteers to tender to operate the volunteer components of the community transport system or have other vital input to the system.

5.2.2. Community

The model has the potential to be a community transport system and not simply a coordinated transport service for the HACC and Disability Services target groups. The model lends itself for expansion into a wide range of community populations. It also encourages community ownership.

The community aspect is encouraged through:

- Co-ordinating the commercial and the not-for-profit transport services
- Representatives of the community on the Reference Group
- Development of a culture in the La Trobe Valley that emphasises a community-wide responsibility for solving issues related to transport.
- Use of volunteer drivers and transport companions thus tapping into an important community support and resource.
- Operating across the Shire.
- Inclusion of a service development role in the Central Coordination service to ensure innovative strategies are developed for people who live beyond the main ‘corridors’ of the La Trobe Valley.

5.2.3. Transport & Mobility

For many people availability of transport is only one part of the solution. Appropriate access is also often related to issues of mobility – to the ability to move about. For example, the person may require someone to assist help them on and off a vehicle, or to help them ‘navigate’ timetables, to provide personal care on a lengthy train or bus trip, and so forth.

The model incorporates both transport and mobility.

This comprehensive approach to transport access is encouraged through:

- The use of a service development role in the Central Coordination Service to ensure that matters of mobility, such as street lighting, access to footpaths, and so forth are raised with relevant responsible bodies and solutions are explored.
- The use of volunteer companions to assist with personal assistance, friendly support, etc.
- The Department of Infrastructure and local government being represented on the Reference Group.

5.2.4. Coordinated

At present transport services for the frail aged, people with disabilities and the carers of both groups are separate from each other. This results in some overlaps in service provision, a lack of capacity for some services to meet the demand and a duplication of efforts.

Coordination of services can result in a transport service ‘system’ rather than a collection of individual services. This is encouraged through:

- Co-ordination functions provide a single point of entry, booking and dispatch.
- The potential for all vehicles and transport resources operated by community organisations to be included.
- Inclusion of a service development function to enable coordination between commercial operators and not-for-profit transport providers.

5.2.5. Systems change

A coordinated, integrated transport system must achieve real outcomes for consumers. It must operate for purposes other than the gaining of efficiencies. The real outcomes for consumers will largely only be achieved through solving the many systems issues that further disadvantage those without access to transport.

Systems change is encouraged through:

- The inclusion of a service development role in the Central Coordination Service to ensure that barriers are identified and explored for possible solutions.
- Development of a culture in the La Trobe Valley that emphasises a community-wide ownership of solving transport disadvantage.
- The use of a Reference Group for considering those issue identified as systems issues.

5.3. How does the model operate?

In the model the community transport system is made up of a ‘core’ that is integrated and coordinated with the commercial sector as well as other transport services operated by community organisations that do not form part of the core. The objective is to improve the transport access of people who would be otherwise ‘transport disadvantaged’. The system receives support and advice from a Community Reference Group.

The ‘core’ is comprised of 3 distinct services:

- i. Fleet Management
- ii. Central Coordination
- iii. Transport Companions

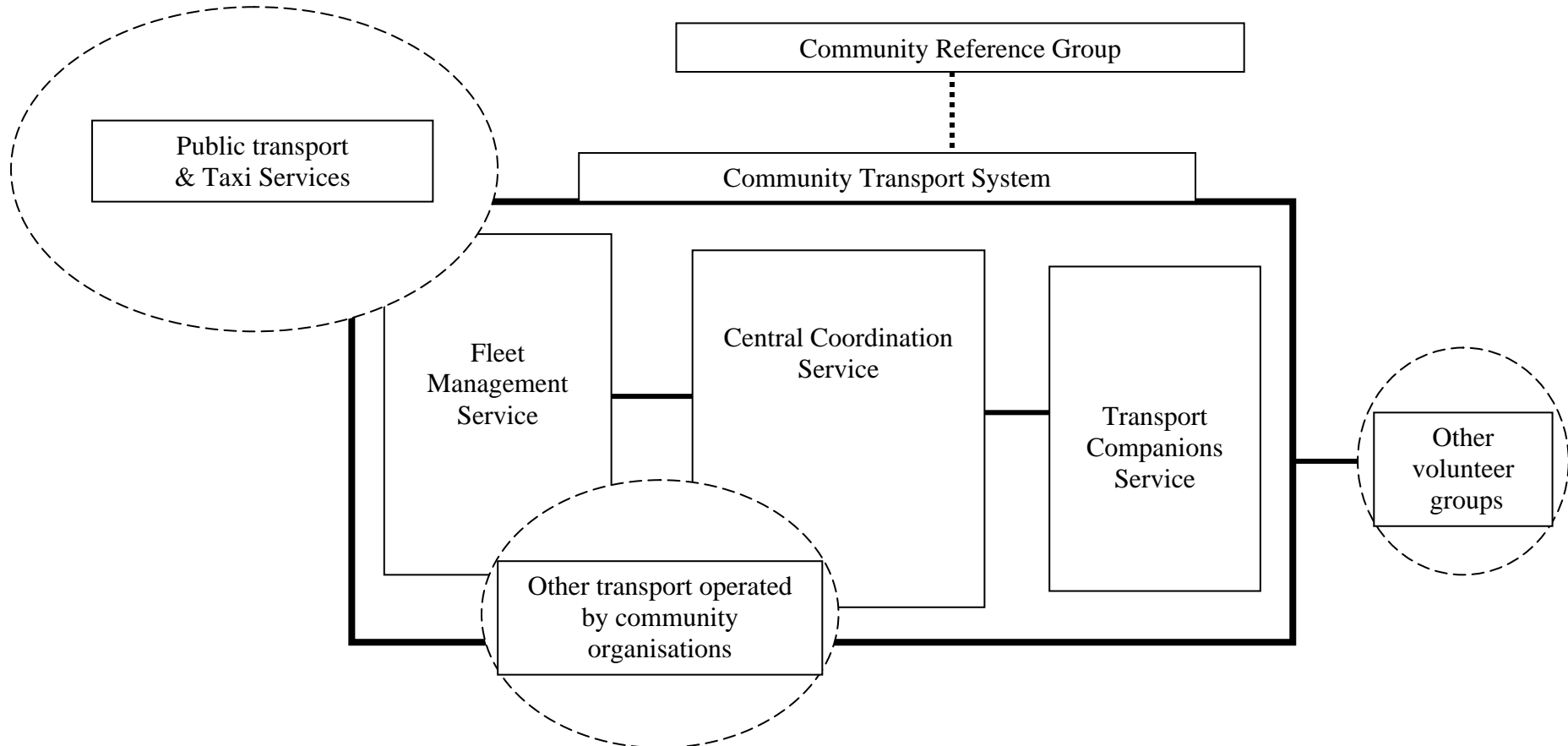
These three services have very specific functions, requiring specific skills and knowledge. Although different from each other, each is a critical part of the whole. These three services may be operated by a single organisation with the capacity to develop or purchase the required “know-how”, a consortia of organisations that together have the required levels of skills and expertise or by separate ‘expert’ organisations that connect via contracts or written agreements.

These three services are integrated with critical complementary and like-services in the community, such as public transport and taxi services, other community organisations operating transport services and other volunteer groups. These complementary and like-services have a necessary part to play in an overall integrated community transport and mobility system. They remain as separate entities but participate in the integrated model according to negotiated agreements.

The model, with the inter-relationships, is represented in diagram 1.

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Diagram 1: An Integrated Community Transport & Mobility System



Larne's Integrated Community Transport & Mobility Model © 1998 – designed by Julie Hind, Larne Pty.Ltd.

5.4. The functions of the ‘core’

The model identifies 6 main functions to be carried out. These are:

- i. Management of fleet
- ii. Dispatch
- iii. Management of drivers
- iv. Coordination
- v. Service development
- vi. Management of transport companions

5.4.1. Management of fleet

This involves the management of the capital assets and equipment in relation to vehicles and includes responsibility for:

- Purchasing and/or lease of vehicles
- Insurance
- Servicing and maintenance
- Cleaning
- Safety
- Administration of log books
- Adherence to relevant legislation

For the purposes of this project, this function includes responsibility for all the HACC-funded and Disability Day Services sector fleet. It may also include the fleet operations of other community organisations, depending on their level of participation in the system.

There are a number of options for the operation of this component of the system. None of the options is mutually exclusive of the other. It is possible for the model to operate effectively using a mix of the options. For example *Agency X* might choose to retain its own vehicles, thus choose option 1. *Agency Y* might choose to own, but not operate its vehicles so might choose to pool its vehicles and other resources via Option 2. *Agency C* might want to get out of the non-core transport function and choose to sell its vehicles, contracting the required services via Option 3.

Note: In each instance the vehicles refer to those used for transporting consumers to and from the service, or during programs. Other agency vehicles are not included.

The different fleet options are presented in *Tables 5-7*.

Fleet Options

Table 5.

Option	Situation	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Option 1 Fleet owned & managed by the individual organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations allow access to their vehicles in non-peak times via contract/written agreement. • Organisations remain responsible for all fleet management issues. Some functions may be delegated to the Central Coordination Service via a contract or written agreement, but ultimate responsibility rests with the individual organisations that own the vehicles. • Organisations may recoup some of the overhead costs from the Central Coordination Service &, or the users. • Status quo for peak times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little impact on organisations & their existing services • A good first step for some organisations • Potential for non-HACC & non-disability services to participate whilst still retaining autonomy over their assets. • Vehicles available in non-peak times – this is often when the project’s target group requires access to a range of vehicle types. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More difficult to achieve a single entry point – would require complex protocol arrangements. • Organisations remain in the business of providing transport when this may not be their core business. • Continues the welfare paradigm. • Needs comprehensive protocols & contracts to clarify responsibilities, especially in relation to repairs, replacement, etc.

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Fleet options – Table 6:

Option	Situation	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Option 2</p> <p>Fleet owned by the individual organisations but managed by the Fleet Manager.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations retain ownership of the fleet but “pool” them via contracts/written agreements. • The “pool” is managed by the Fleet Manager. • Participating organisations negotiate the required usage for their consumers • Fleet Management may be undertaken by the Central Coordination Service or by an external organisation or business via tender, e.g., bus company, taxi service, Shire, etc. • Organisations that own the vehicles may recoup some or all of the overheads from the Central Coordination Service and, or users. • Vehicles remain garaged at site(s) of owner or at negotiated common site(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves closer to transport being an infrastructure issue. • Better enables organisations to concentrate on their core business. • Allows organisations with strong desire to retain ownership to do so. • Vehicles available at all times via “pooling”. • Allows access to a range of vehicle types at all times, not just non-peak times. • Enables a single entry point for consumers of all participating organisations. • Coordinates routes for target populations & minimises duplication. • If Fleet Manager is external body it may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Result in a greater level of community-wide input. ▪ Enable an ‘expert’ to take on the role. ▪ Minimise the risk of solving transport access problems through purchase of another HACC-funded vehicle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs comprehensive protocols or contracts to clarify responsibilities, especially in relation to repairs, replacement, etc. • May need to find alternative ‘garage’ venues. • May be a perceived loss of ownership or autonomy by organisation. • If Fleet Manager is external to the Central Coordination there will be a need to negotiate contracts.

Fleet options

Table 7:

Option	Situation	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><i>Option 3</i></p> <p>Fleet owned by Fleet Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations sign over or sell fleet to Fleet Management Service. • Participating organisations negotiate usage for consumer. • Fleet Management Service may be operated by the Central Coordination Service or by an external organisation or business via tender, e.g., bus company, taxi service, Shire, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations rid themselves of a function that is not core business. • No need for contracts related to vehicle ownership, repair, replacement etc. • Potential for Fleet Management Service to be operated by an expert in the field. This has potential for improving the overall fleet if the external expert has other vehicles that may supplement the community transport fleet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constituents such as Committees of Management may not approve of selling assets. • There is a need to negotiate consumer-use contracts

5.4.2. Dispatch

This involves:

- The knowledge of routes
- Matching of consumer's needs with transport on ground
- Maintaining the computerised (or other) system for efficient and effective dispatch of vehicles

5.4.3. Management of drivers

This involves the recruitment, selection, training, accreditation (if required), matching and on-going support and management of drivers. These drivers might be volunteers or paid drivers, depending on the budget, the relevance and the organisation or business that operates the function.

5.4.4. Coordination

The main responsibility of this function is the provision of overall coordination of the many parts that make up the *system*.

The coordination function includes tasks related to:

Management of the system:

- Negotiating, maintaining and monitoring contracts and agreements with other components of the system, e.g., contracts with the taxi service, agreements developed between the 3 core components, if these are operated by different organisations, etc.
- Ensuring the system has appropriate tools and equipment to undertake the necessary coordination, e.g., geographic information systems, etc.

Budget:

- Managing the budget
- Purchasing appropriate services

Consumer service:

- Intake
- Assessment of transport needs
- Booking
- Purchasing appropriate transport & mobility services
- Monitoring of outcomes for consumers and levels of satisfaction

5.4.5. Service development

This is a critical function of the model for ensuring systems-change. It includes, but is not limited to the following responsibilities:

- Exploring the impact systems have upon transport access
- Providing community education and information about how to improve access to transport and mobility
- Input to local and regional strategic transport planning
- Research and development
- Raising awareness of low cost transport options
- Input to regional promotion for improved public transport use
- Regular surveys of transport needs

5.4.6. Management of transport companions

This involves the recruitment, selection, training, matching, management and on-going support of transport companions. Generally, these companions would be volunteers. In some instances when a person requires highly specialised assistance, the companion support might be provided by a paid person.

5.5. How are the functions managed?

There are a number of options for the management of the 6 functions. Some functions may equally belong in one or more of the 'core' components. Some functions however belong solely in one component.

The following table depicts the three options.

Table 8: Options for managing the functions of the ‘core’

<i>Option A</i>	<i>Option B</i>	<i>Option C</i>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p align="center">Fleet Management Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of the fleet </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p align="center">Central Coordination Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispatch • Management of drivers • Coordination • Service development </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p align="center">Transport Companions Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of volunteer transport companions </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p align="center">Fleet Management Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of the fleet • Dispatch • Management of drivers </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p align="center">Central Coordination Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination • Service development </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p align="center">Transport Companions Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of volunteer transport companions </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p align="center">Fleet Management Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of the fleet • Dispatch </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p align="center">Central Coordination Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of drivers • Coordination • Service development </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p align="center">Transport Companions Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of volunteer transport companions </div>

5.6. Governance

The governance of the integrated community transport system would vary depending upon how the functions are managed. It would be possible for a single organisation to operate and manage the whole system. In that case, the governance responsibility would rest with that single organisation. It would also be possible for the different functions to be managed by a number of organisations, and hence be governed separately. Should separate functions be managed by different organisations the operations would be integrated via protocols, collaborative partnerships, and so forth.

5.7. The Community Reference Group

This group is comprised of a range of key stakeholders:

- The agencies that are participating, e.g., the ATSSs, HACC funded organisations and other community organisations that wish to be take part. Depending on the number of the agencies participating, each organisation might have a representative or, alternatively, one member may represent a number of organisations in the same sector.
- DHS – and any other government departments that may be contributing to the cost
- Consumer advocacy groups
- The Department of Infrastructure
- The La Trobe Valley Bus Company
- The Victorian Taxi Association
- The Shire
- The Transport & Communication Forum
- Other relevant community interests

Members of the reference group would be responsible for:

- Representing a particular community or government constituency
- Providing advice to those operating the various components of the system
- Ensuring that a whole community focus is retained
- Participating in the continuing development and improvement of the system

6. Implementing the model

6.1. Starting from a small base

Ashby et al report on the findings of a research project called *Community Transport Brokerage Schemes* undertaken in 1994 by Rust PPK. This examination found, among other things, that “a scheme should start from a small base, and then grow to a larger regional level.”

Therefore, although the model for La Trobe Valley has been designed as a broad integrated community transport system, implementation should be gradual to ensure success.

It is recommended that the initial implementation remain focused on those services that were core to this project - the 3 ATSSs and the 2 ADASS programs. Other agencies and consumers could be added to the system over time.

6.2. Choosing an initial focus to maximise consumer outcomes

In implementing the model the primary emphasis could be placed on co-ordinating the existing Monday to Friday transport routes. The purpose of coordination is to achieve jointly what a single agency cannot do. A coordinated approach therefore is likely to achieve efficiencies. It could also result in some improved outcomes for consumers. For example, a consumer might gain access to a particular day service or activity that is currently not possible within an agency’s single resources base.

However an increased level of consumer outcomes might be possible if the primary initial emphasis is on establishing and co-ordinating an after-hours transport service and a volunteer companions component. Together, these could offer a level of access to social and recreational activities not currently possible and immediately enable access to transport to a wider target group.

No matter which of these primary initial emphases is chosen a critical immediate focus must be on building the service development role of the co-ordinating function because it is this function, more than any other, that will bring about significant change.

It is recommended that the initial focus be two-pronged:

- i. Any new funding be used to establish a coordinated after-hours service and to establish the all important service development role of the co-ordinating function.*
- ii. Co-ordination of the existing Monday to Friday transport routes be established between the 3 ATSSs and the 2 ADASS programs, as described in the “Phasing-in of the model”.*

6.3. Resourcing the model

Between them, the 5 services that form the core of this project dedicate significant resources to the transport. In theory, a pooling and redeployment of these resources should enable the model to be implemented - at least partially between these services. However, in practical terms the resources might be difficult to readily realise because they are committed in ways that do not easily lend to pooling and redeployment. For example, an agency might use a program instructor to co-ordinate the transport. Attempts to extract and pool this resource might leave an agency with insufficient funds to continue to meet its employer/employee obligations.

Clearly there are also aspects of the model that currently do not exist and which therefore are not currently funded. For example, the service development function is not a role currently undertaken by any of the services. Nor is the volunteer companions an existing component, although some agencies, such as the La Trobe Community Health Service might use volunteers at times to act as 'jockeys' in the community vehicles.

Any efforts to meet the needs of consumers after hours and on weekends are additional to the current services, and possibly beyond the mandate of the 5 services. For example an ATSS is responsible for providing day services. Some of the activities might occur after-hours or on weekends. Generally, the agency would not be responsible for broader social and recreational support services.

As indicated previously, although most agencies have made their vehicles available to other community groups after hours, the offers have generally not been taken up, often because of the lack of anyone to co-ordinate during these times.

The broader application of the model for consumer groups other than those of the 3 ATSSs and the 2 ADASS programs, and for the community in general, are without doubt additional to existing resources.

It is recommended that the model be resourced through a mix of:

- *Re-deployment of all, or some, of the transport resources of agencies that currently provide community transport separately.*
- *Additional funds from government. Given the argument that transport is not a welfare issue but one of infrastructure, additional funds should be sought from the Department of Infrastructure, as well as from the Department of Human Services (e.g. via HACC) and other government bodies whose consumers might be targeted as recipients of the integrated community transport service, e.g. Veteran's Affairs*
- *Some level of service charge.*

The level of resources should be determined as part of the program development phase of the implementation.

6.4. Cost implications

The actual cost of implementing the model is the matter of further program development. This project was to look at indicative costs only.

Broad costs are provided here as a guide only. They are based on Option A – managing the functions of the core.

6.4.1. Fleet Management Service

A fee charged by the Fleet Management Service, payable by the vehicle owners or Central Coordination Service through existing recurrent vehicles grants, operational grants or user donations – or a combination of these. A fee of 58 cents per kilometre is assumed. The level of resources required cannot be determined at this point because it is dependent upon the level of use. As an example, in 1997 *Wodonga CMT* averaged around 23,000 kilometres per month, providing commuting and program transport to 1,200 people from the HACC target group and people attending disability day services. (E.g. 1 person making 20 trips per month = 20 ‘people’).

It is likely that there would be a non-recurrent need for equipment for tracking and managing the fleet.

6.4.2. Central Coordination Service

Employment of a full time co-ordinator would cost around \$48,500 recurrently – based on a base salary of around \$36,000 per annum plus 15% salary on-costs plus around 20% administrative overheads. (Full time refers to 40 hours Monday to Friday.) Employment of an assistant for weekends and after hours to a total of 35 hours per week (10 hours each Saturday & Sunday and 3 hours each evening, Monday – Friday) would cost around \$30,000 recurrently – based on \$26,000 per annum, pro rata plus 15% salary on-costs.

Naturally, a smaller scale service, or a gradual implementation would mean that a co-ordinator could be employed part time. Likewise, any assistant hours could be reduced.

It is assumed these funds would come from agencies re-deploying all, or some, of their transport resources plus additional government grants. For example, *Wodonga CMT* employs its co-ordinator and administrative support from a mix of HACC funds and a proportion of the Unit Cost from participating disability day services. *Community Options Brokerage Service* contracts commuting and program transport from *Wodonga CMT* using \$1,000 of each EFT. This \$1,000 covers coordination and vehicle running costs.

How much would be needed in the way of additional government grants cannot be determined at this stage. This would depend on:

- The extent of the service system, i.e. how broadly it is applied across the community,
- The capacity for agencies to realise and re-deploy the resources they currently dedicate to transport.
- How many hours the service will operate.

Determination of additional funding requirements would be the subject of further program development.

DHS indicated during this project that it had applied for additional recurrent HACC funds to assist implement the model.

It is also likely that there would be a non-recurrent need for equipment for tracking and managing the coordination aspects of the service.

6.4.3. Transport Companions Service

Employment of a volunteer co-ordinator for the equivalent of 2 days per week would cost around \$16,500 – based on \$31,000 per annum pro rata plus 15% salary on-costs plus 20% administrative overheads.

It is assumed these resources would come from additional government grants and possibly a small service fee charged to the consumer.

This estimated cost might be less should an existing volunteer program that has the necessary infrastructure deliver the service.

6.5. Phasing-in the model

6.5.1. Program development

Successful full implementation of the model requires further program development to occur. Critical activities would include:

- Presenting and discussing the model with key community groups and agencies to assess which agencies and groups would participate, and how.
- Presenting and discussing the model with key government bodies to enlist their support (including financial) for the model.
- Exploration of technology to support the fleet management and central coordination functions.
- Developing detailed cost schedules, identifying sources of funding and planning an implementation schedule based on this information.
- Preparing service specifications for each of the functions and services of the model to form the basis of any tendering or contract process and subsequent negotiation of Funding and Service Agreements.

It is recommended that the 3 government bodies that have immediate interest in the model – Department of Human Services, Department of Infrastructure and the La Trobe Shire - jointly fund a program development project.

6.5.2. Coordination of the HACC and disability day services

The ‘bottom line’ for the implementation of the model is the coordination of transport services for people with disabilities who attend the three ATSSs in the shire, and the HACC target group. This could act as the ‘small base’ from which the broader model develops.

This partial implementation requires the agencies responsible for these services to:

- i. Share resources with each other and the broader community, e.g. making their vehicles available after hours.
- ii. Explore and implement ways to minimise duplication of routes.
- iii. Work co-operatively to provide greater flexibility for consumers and enable improved access to services.

It is assumed that over the longer-term there would be no need, or little, for additional recurrent resources to co-ordinate the existing functions and responsibilities of these 5 agencies.

Additional functions would, clearly, require additional recurrent resources. Furthermore, there might be a need for additional non-recurrent resources for capital and equipment such as computers and software. There might also be a need for an injection of non-recurrent funds for coordination, until the agencies are able to realise their resources.

Importantly, the necessary project work that is required so that the 5 agencies can move toward co-operative arrangements might not be wholly possible within the existing budgets and workplans. There might be a need for either executive support or a small, short-term injection of funds to supplement resources the agencies put to the task.

Unlike the full implementation of the model, which is the responsibility of many, this partial implementation is a matter between the 5 agencies and DHS, as the funding body that is requiring co-operative approaches. The securing of any additional funds, whether recurrent or non-recurrent, is a matter of negotiation between these parties.

It is recommended that the 5 agencies conduct a joint project that enables them to meet the 3 responsibilities listed above, negotiating additional support and assistance from DHS, as appropriate.

Appendix 1 – List of people consulted

Carmen Banfield	Cooinda Hill ATSS
Debbie Johnson	Cooinda Hill ATSS
Warren Butcher	DHS
Mike Butcher	DHS
Dennis Gaylard	DHS
Rob Herni	DHS
Gerry Kennedy	Public Transport Directorate (DOI)
Chris Suttie	DOI
Jackie Chambers	Moe Life Skills
Joelle Champert	Moe Life Skills
Siobhan McCrohan	Scope Disability Services
Linda Rowley	Scope Disability Services
A group of consumers	Scope Disability Services
Wendy Hansen	La Trobe Shire
Jeff Marjoram	La Trobe Shire
Noreen Nation	La Trobe Shire
Doug Caulfield	La Trobe Community Health Service
Janina Matcott	La Trobe Community Health Service
Pat Turner	La Trobe Community Health Service
Michael Baulch	La Trobe Valley Bus Lines
Graeme Turner	La Trobe Valley Bus Company
Adrian Crozier	La Trobe Regional Hospital
Pam Foley	La Trobe Regional Hospital
Brian Jenner	La Trobe Regional Hospital
Doug Murray	Traralgon Taxi Service
Eileen Geery	Gippsland Psychiatric Services
Jo Joyce	Central Gippsland Disability Council Inc.
Tony Bolton	Margery Cole Hostel
Christian Zahra	Central Gippsland Aboriginal Health & Housing
Lisa Sinha	La Trobe Valley Migrant Resource Centre
Leonie Coleman	Co Care Gippsland
Andrew Redson	Quantum Community Care
John Brookes	Youth Forum
Jack Huxtable	La Trobe Transport & Communication Forum
Darryl Marks	La Trobe Transport & Communication Forum
Garry Mooney	Taskmasters Inc.
John Mutsaers	Good Beginnings
Peter Garbelini	Victorian Taxi Association (VTA)
Carmen Giddens	VTA
Jenny Trewin	VTA
Country & Rural Affairs Committee	VTA
John Foley	Bendigo Taxi Service
Kerry Nelson	Corangamite Shire

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Bernie McIntosh	Ovens & King Community Managed Transport
Robyn Adams	Wodonga Community Managed Transport
Margaret Wilson	Bright Taxi Service

Plus 12-15 people from community groups, consumers and other interested people attended a focus group conducted by the project team and hosted by the Central Gippsland Disability Council Inc.

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Appendix 3: Notes from the Transport Coordination Study workshop

Held at Scope, Morwell on 25 March 1998

Purpose of these notes

These notes were taken during the discussion groups held as part of the Transport Coordination Study workshop. They have not been edited to provide explanation or a context. The notes therefore will probably be of use only to those people who attended because they will serve as reminder notes to the whole discussion.

Participants of workshop

Name	Organisation
John Mutsaers	Good Beginnings
Carmen Giddens	Victorian Taxi Association (VTA)
Jenny Trewin	VTA
Garry Mooney	Taskmasters Inc.
John Brookes	Youth Forum
Gerry Kennedy	Public Transport Directorate (DOI)
Carmen Banfield	Coinda Hill ATSS
Peter Garbelini	VTA
Darryl Marks	La Trobe Transport & Communication Forum
Michael Baulch	La Trobe Valley Bus Lines
Wendy Hansen	La Trobe Council
Joelle Champert	Moe Life Skills
Warren Butcher	Department of Human Services
Linda Rowley	SCOPE

Listening to the needs & issues of others

- No available seats on school buses so not able to include other passengers
- Social life of the HACC target group is limited because of the lack of access to transport
- Difficult to find individual access options because of the cost – equally, people do not always want to go out in large groups
- Not all people seem to be aware of the affordability of taxis
- All vehicles busy at peak times
- Modifications to buses for LV Bus Lines has enormous resource implications – initial \$ cost plus ongoing loss of fares because seats have to be removed to allow wheelchairs etc.
- Many people in the HACC target group need personal support from “a to b” & especially during long-haul routes
- It is against the law to request a specific-sex driver
- Conversions for the disabled can be used by other, e.g., women with prams. There is a need to encourage wider patronage to counteract the loss of fare that modifications may initially result in.
- Buses in Valley have to be multi-purpose, e.g., access to the community during the day but school bus before 7 after school.
- Difficulty in connecting to transport
- Cost of agency providing transport
- Taxis are great – drivers are trained to follow procedures in emergency situations
- There is an increasing need for transport by people in the HACC target group
- People need to be able to get from “a to b” and some need personal support
- Consumer has a need to get to know the person providing the transport & support
- Some contract arrangements now between agencies and taxi company
- Needs of youth who may not have \$
- Taxis are not the sole solution – need other answers
- Many people not in HACC target group but in need of transport do not have concessions
- Guidelines & eligibility are not consistent between state & commonwealth – lead to issues for public transport providers – guidelines are complex, e.g. there are 15 different concession cards
- People’s needs do not always fit into regular times
- There are many people disconnected from the community
- Need for transport after hours o & on weekends
- Sometimes housing isolated in areas that have poor transport routes

Essential ‘ingredients’ of a coordinated transport service

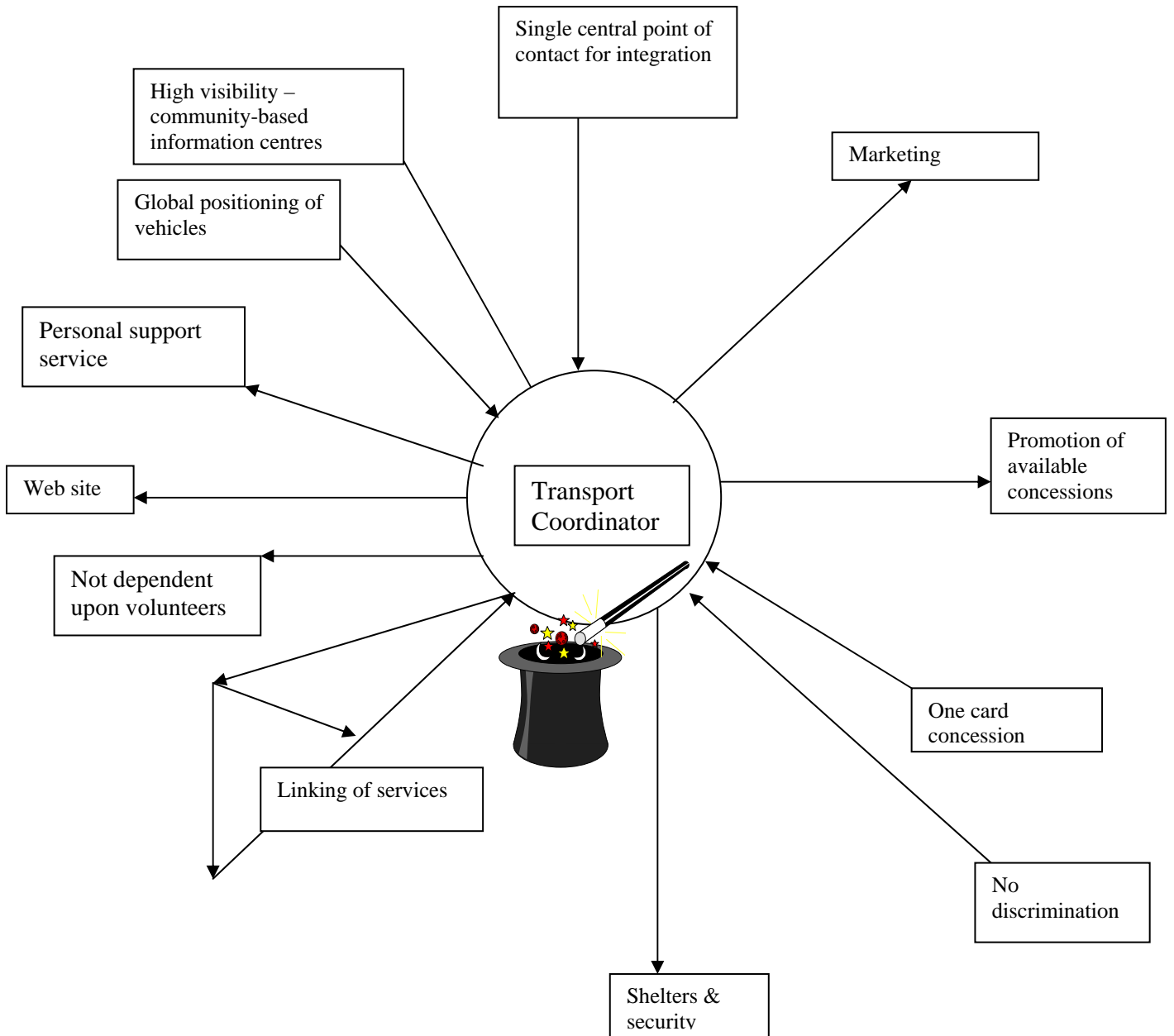
- Central coordinated
- Marketing/advertising
- Needs based
- Regularly updated audit of resources that are available
- A wish list that forms part of ongoing system development
- Commitment from people & agencies participating in the model
- Use of volunteers so that their value-added is tapped
- Available of a 24 hour basis
- Flexibility
- Integrated
- Ongoing consultation
- Accessible infrastructure & vehicles
- Safe for client & operator
- Caring

What can we each bring to a coordinated model?

Taxis	Bus Co.	ATSS	DOI	Shire	DHS
24 hour service able to go anywhere door-to-door VTA co-ordinates the industry Commitment	Capacity to improve routes & vehicles Can be the link between different services An existing good coverage of routes Timetable information	Can provide community education patronage	Experience of what has been trialled elsewhere Costing advice Marketing skills Link with transport arm of govt.	Shire-wide focus & interest	Funding Knowledge of a range of the community & social issues Some planning functions

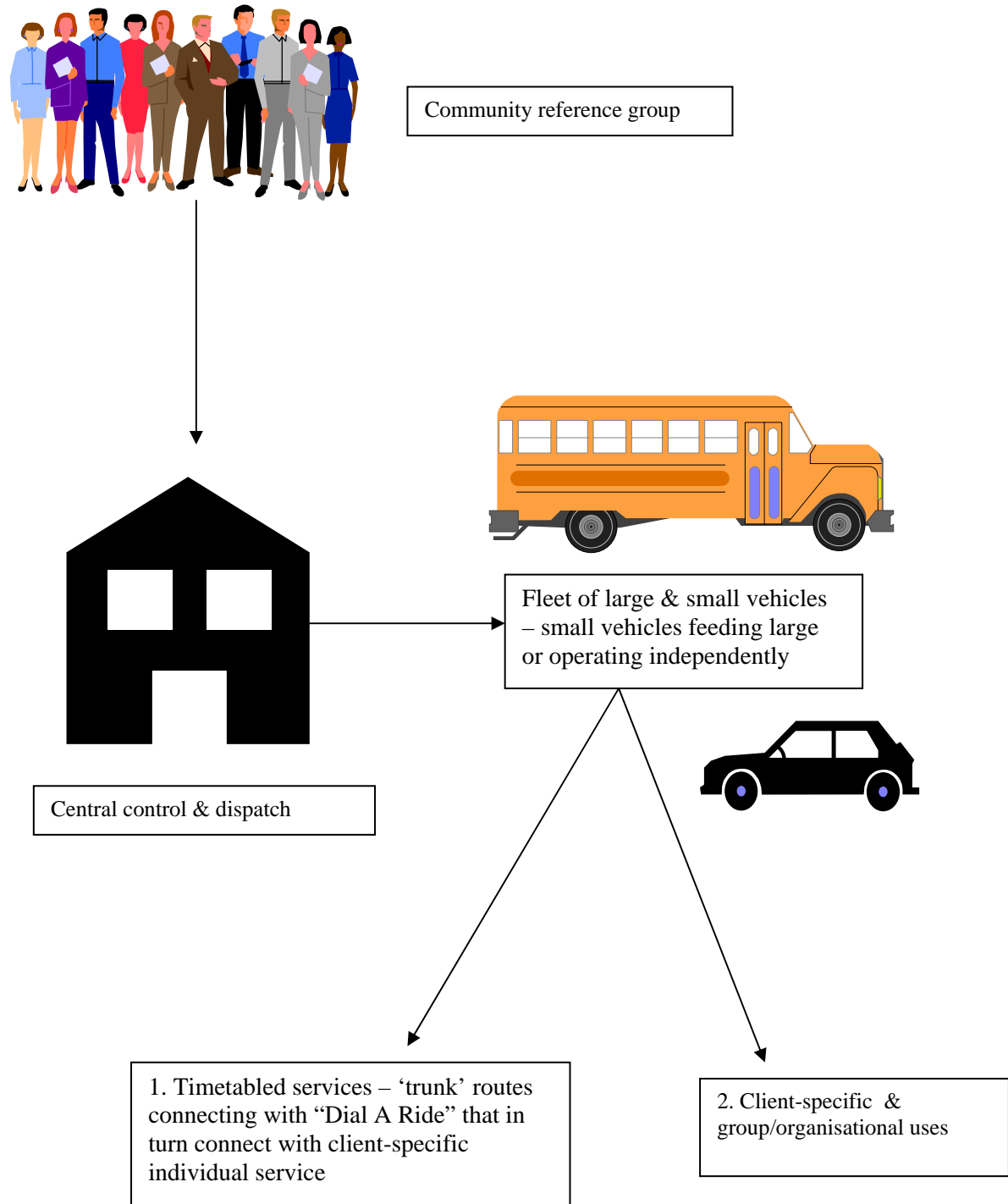
Suggested models:

Participants ‘workshopped’ their ideas for improved coordinated transport models. The suggestions are as follows:



Transport model A:

Transport model B:



Transport model C:

All stakeholders linked through information technology
Centrally managed/coordinated
Equitability to all disability types
Volunteers to be skilled & trained
Further training for current providers
Cost effective
Dial – A Bus
Dial a Volunteer ‘supporter’
Fixed route taxis
Phone link to various services – trains, taxis, bus, etc.

