



Mandurah bus services operate from the city's new bus station

Regional Town Bus Services

Introduction

The Regional Town Bus Services Section (RTBS) resides within the Transperth, Regional and School Bus Division of the Public Transport Authority. It is responsible for the management of public transport systems in regional Western Australia, primarily involving regional town bus services and a small number of contracted inter-regional bus services. At 30 June 2005, there were 15 services operating in 14 major regional towns throughout the State. In addition, there were several minor subsidised services that provided passenger transport connections via the inland road network.

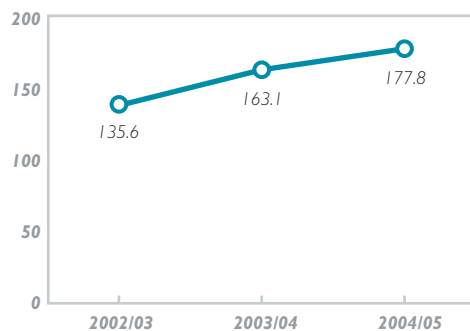
RTBS is also responsible for the administration of a small number of regular passenger transport (RPT) services operating in the Perth metropolitan area in a complementary capacity to Transperth services. The performance of these services has been included in the RTBS figures for 2004/05.

Statement of Objectives

The objectives of the Regional Town Bus Services section for 2004/05 were to:

- continue with a programmed approach of reviewing regional bus services;
- convert the existing informal contracts with regional bus operators to 12-year formal contracts;
- develop a bus replacement program to address the longer-term bus fleet needs of regional services; and
- find solutions for regional transport problems in consultation with the local communities.

Service



Regional Town Bus Services:
Passenger place kilometres (millions)

Regional Town Bus Services

Efficiency

The cost per 1000 place kilometres (see the Performance Indicators section of this Annual Report) rose in 2004/05 because of a change in reporting gross, not net, expenditure. Excluding this, the cost-efficiency did not change significantly.

Passenger and occupational safety

At 30 June 2005, passenger and occupational safety records were maintained by individual operators. RTBS is developing a standardised reporting format for all regional town bus services to facilitate RTBS maintaining such records as from 2005/06.

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

The Year's Developments

The total capacity provided on regional bus passenger services increased by 9.1 per cent from 163.089 million passenger place kilometres in 2003/04 to 177.860 million in 2004/05. The increase mainly resulted from:

- the full-year benefit of service enhancements introduced in Bunbury and Busselton during the previous year;
- the benefit of service enhancements introduced in Port Hedland and Kalgoorlie;
- the expansion of the trial road coach service running from Perth to Port Hedland from one to two return services per week in the middle of April 2005;
- the expansion, on a trial basis, of the four-wheel drive service providing transport between Port Hedland, Marble Bar and Nullagine, and Newman and Nullagine; and
- the introduction of a trial youth bus service between the towns of Wickham, Roebourne, Karratha and Dampier. In June 2005, the service was extended to Point Samson.

During the year, six country bus operators entered into 12-year contracts with the PTA, while three metropolitan based operators entered into contracts of varying terms to provide services in a complementary capacity to Transperth. In addition, a formal contract was signed with the Shire of East Pilbara for the four-wheel drive service operated in the Pilbara.

At year's end, a bus replacement program proposing the transfer of Mercedes Benz NH low-floor buses from the Transperth fleet to regional services in the future was being developed. This proposal, if accepted, will reduce the average age of the regional bus fleet to around 12 years and provide accessible buses on regional bus services and will be the start of RTBS progressively complying with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport and Guidelines under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992.

The Transperth timetable format was adopted on bus services in major regional towns which brought about timetable uniformity across the State. Also, work began on implementing a standard bus stop system in the regional areas with orange posts designated for general commuter stops and blue posts for school bus stops.

At 30 June 2005, the regional bus fleet totalled 134 vehicles compared with 145 in 2003/04. The decrease primarily resulted from Transperth taking over some of the services that were previously administered by RTBS operators in the Perth metropolitan area.

Three late-model low-floor wheelchair accessible Mercedes Benz buses were transferred from Transperth to the TransGoldfields fleet in October 2004 for use on revised services in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

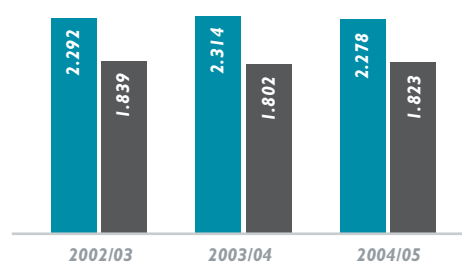
Revised town and school bus services were introduced in Geraldton (from 15 November 2004) and Albany (from 19 December 2004). In Geraldton, the new services include a City Clipper route via the museum and the HMAS Sydney Memorial.

Revised routes and improved service levels were introduced in Port Hedland on 4 January 2005.

Patronage

Fare-paying initial boardings on regional bus services increased by 1.2 per cent from 1.802 million in 2003/04 to 1.823 million in 2004/05. However, total boardings (which include free travel and transfers) decreased by 1.5 per cent from 2.314 million in 2003/04 to 2.278 million.

As a result of the decrease in total boardings and an 11.6 per cent increase in service kilometres, total boardings per service kilometre fell by 11.5 per cent from 0.96 in 2003/04 to 0.85.



Regional Town Bus Services: Patronage (millions)

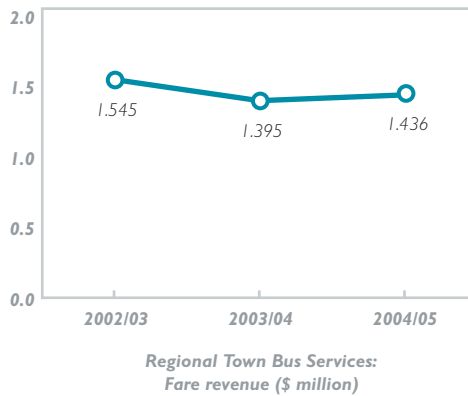
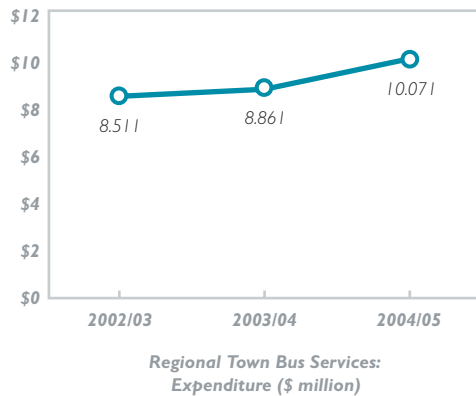
■ Total boardings ■ Fare-paying boardings

Customer Satisfaction

Following a poor response to the 2004 survey, a passenger satisfaction survey was not conducted during 2004/05.

Revenue/Expenditure

The total cost of operating the regional town bus services in 2004/05 was \$10.071 million compared with \$8.861 million in the previous year, an increase of 24.3 per cent. The cost increase was primarily due to a change in reporting gross, not net, expenditure. Fare revenue increased by 2.9 per cent from \$1.395 million to \$1.436 million.



In the Future

In the coming year(s), RTBS will:

- Complete the signing of the remaining formal regional contracts;
- Conduct or complete operational reviews for the public bus services in Broome, Busseton, Dunsborough, Esperance and Geraldton. In addition, the trial bus services introduced in 2004/05 will be evaluated for their success;
- Develop a regional bus replacement program with a view to reducing the average age of the bus fleets in country areas and introducing accessible buses on regional services;
- Introduce the Wayfarer MultiRider system in all regional towns that currently have an inadequate ticketing system. MultiRider equipment will become available with the introduction of the SmartRider ticketing system on the Transperth network during 2005/06;
- Investigate the capacity of Transperth to take over the remaining few RPT services that are currently operated in the Perth metropolitan area by RTBS-contracted operators; and
- Complete work already commenced to define Public Transport Areas around regional townships and clarify where fares will be paid by service users. Also, RTBS will continue to assess the ability of contracted public school bus services to pick up fare-paying passengers in order to bring about efficiencies on the combined contract and public school bus network.