

Public Transport

Public transport plays a central role in supporting access to a vibrant and people-focused City, enabling high volumes of daily travel for work, education and other activities. The network performs strongly along rail corridors and key bus routes, but growing pressure is emerging. Gaps in access, heavy reliance on buses in constrained streets, and limited capacity to expand services will need to be addressed to support reliable access, improve user experience, and strengthen the city as a liveable and well-functioning place.

Context

Public transport is central to the City of Perth's role as Western Australia's capital and economic hub. A well-connected public transport network to and within the City is vital to achieve a safe, sustainable and prosperous city. As Perth's population grows and public transport ridership increases, planning becomes critical. Services and infrastructure must respond to increased future demand.

The City will need to work in advocating to the Public Transport Authority (PTA) and other transport agencies. This will help address issues and progress improvements to services and infrastructure.

Quick Facts

Some key points about Perth's public transport network are outlined below:

- Metropolitan Perth's rail network consists of 85 stations across eight lines.
- Nearly 86 million bus trips were taken in WA last financial year.
- In the City, 14% of workers commute by bus and 27% by train.

Issues

Perth's public transport system is largely radial, as illustrated by Figure 1. The city centre has strong coverage. Some precincts, including QEII, UWA and parts of East Perth, remain car dependent due to limited access and service frequency.

Rail

Perth's metropolitan rail network is extensive. Investment over the past 30 years has increased the share of trips to the City made by public transport. The network provides frequent all-day services – every 15 minutes from 6am to 9pm. Peak services on key lines run up to every 5 minutes, however outside peak times, many routes shift to 10 to 60 minute frequencies. Areas such as QEII, UWA and parts of East Perth remain underserved by rail.

Buses

Buses play a significant complementary role to the rail network, providing feeder services and connecting areas not served by rail. Buses are essential for access to key destinations in the City of Perth. This includes the QEII and UWA precinct, where buses are the only public transport option. The network includes high-frequency trunk routes, free CAT buses, and two major underground bus stations in the city.

High bus volumes on key city streets have created congestion. They have affected street amenity and restricted further capacity increases without transitioning to higher-order modes. Reviews have called for reduced bus duplication, especially on William Street. They also call for improved bus-rail integration and better management of impacts on local amenity.

Ferries

The ferry network is currently a single route across the Swan River between Elizabeth Quay and South Perth. Planned expansions as part of the METRONET on Swan Ferry Service Expansion project include new routes to Applecross and Matilda Bay, serving the UWA precinct.

QEII Medical Centre / UWA precinct

Despite high frequency services such as route 950 and the Purple CAT, travel times remain unattractive compared to cars. The nearest train station is over 1 kilometre from QEII. Growth has outpaced transport improvements and current efforts focus on parking management rather than broader mode shift.

Barriers and Constraints

Some of the barriers that limit public transport improvements are as follows:

Funding challenges for mid-tier and heavy rail

Large public transport projects require significant long-term investment, which creates challenges when the City identifies gaps in access or capacity but is reliant on external funding decisions

Data and Modelling Limitations

High quality data and detailed modelling can provide strong insights into travel patterns and network performance, however requires significant time, specialist skills and funding.



Figure 1 Perth's Rail Network and Key Bus Corridors

Lessons from Other Cities

Perth can draw on lessons and successes from other cities.

Bus rationalisation and street amenity enhancements

Sydney Light Rail provides high-capacity, frequent services in the city centre. This included a complete redesign of the bus network, to reduce bus congestion and duplication of services. The project also integrated placemaking principles to enhance the urban amenity and create people-focused spaces.

Mid-tier transport

The loss of bus reliability due to congestion and 'bus bunching' are not unique to Perth. Other cities such as Sydney and Brisbane created a step change in capacity and reliability through the introduction of mid-tier transport infrastructure.

High-capacity, high-frequency transit

Brisbane and Melbourne invested heavily in transit, significantly increasing the capacity of services to move large numbers of people through the city centre.

Network integration and coordination

Singapore's network coordination, including the strategic location of MRT stations near bus interchanges and stops, and adjacent taxi stands, helps to ensure seamless transfers and first/last mile connectivity. In Zurich, the frequent and reliability-focused tram and bus networks provide passengers with a cohesive and dependable public transit experience.

Opportunities

Key opportunities to enhance public transport include infrastructure and service improvements.

Infrastructure improvements

Heavy rail

New rail corridors and stations in the City would support connectivity and growth, while underserved catchments such as the western end of CBD or QEII/UWA would also benefit.

Mid-tier transport

Referring to street running systems that move more passengers than a typical bus route (e.g. high-capacity bus systems or light rail), these create additional capacity and represent a maturing of the network as it scales to a higher order mode.

Targeted bus priority

Measures such as bus lanes and signal priority can improve journey time reliability, reduce congestion and increase attractiveness of services.

First and last mile

Improvements to pedestrian infrastructure around public transport stops, such as reduced cycle times at intersections help to reduce delays and improve efficiency, safety, comfort and user experience.

Service improvements

Increased bus to rail transfer

Redirecting bus services to interchange with stations outside the city could reduce the number of buses in the city.

Service frequency

Higher off-peak frequencies would support a wider range of trips beyond commuter travel.

Network changes

Shifting some services away from highly concentrated bus routes (e.g. William Street and the Terraces) could ease bus congestion.