Public Transport Strategy and Regional Review 2025

Submission by the South Australian Branch, AITPM

About AITPM

AITPM (the Australian Institute of Traffic Planning & Management) is the leading national membership body representing all Australian Transport Community professionals and practitioners. AITPM members and stakeholders work in fields including transport planning, transport and traffic engineering, transport modelling, active travel, travel demand management and travel behaviour change. The AITPM SA Branch currently has 134 active members who represent professionals in Local Councils, State Government, academic and research organisations and consultancies.

AITPM members and stakeholders work together to ensure multimodal transport systems are designed, built and operated in ways that support healthy people, communities and economies in all parts of Australia. To set a strong foundation for this mission, AITPM has adopted a Policy and Principles Platform that addresses how AITPM will advocate on behalf of the broader Transport Community for the creation of successful transport systems. The AITPM Policy and Principles Platform is provided as Attachment 1 to this submission. See www.aitpm.com.au/policy/policy-platform for further information.

Introduction

The South Australian Government is concurrently developing a State-wide Public Transport Strategy and conducting a review of the public transport needs for regional centres. The strategy has an objective to deliver a more resilient, reliable and accessible public transport network, to promote economic growth and prosperity, and to encourage more sustainable ways to travel for everyone.

The scope of the Public Transport Strategy includes the Adelaide Metro train, tram and bus network that comprises six metropolitan bus contract areas, including the O-Bahn busway. It also includes the regional public transport network with bus and coach services in 19 contracted regions. The regional public transport review will identify key needs and gaps in the bus services for the regional communities and provide recommendations to enhance the regional public transport network.

Our members, who are transport professionals with extensive specialist experience in public transport planning, strategic policy development and best practice research, provide this response with insights and ideas to support the development of the State-wide Public Transport Strategy.

Alignment with AITPM Principles

The State Transport Strategy released in March 2025 was reviewed to identify the alignment of the strategic objectives that are related to Public Transport with the AITPM Principles. The findings are:

- **Sustainability** has a Strong alignment with AITPM values (Policy and Principles Platform) because it includes a goal for the transition to net-zero, low-emission vehicles and placemaking concepts that are well-aligned with the AITPM sustainability goals.
- **Safety** has a Moderate alignment. In the State Transport Strategy, safety is addressed, but mostly in general terms. It could benefit from a greater focus on vulnerable users in the community and applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

- **Inclusivity and Equity** has Moderate alignment. Accessibility to transport is acknowledged, but equity for disadvantaged groups, such as with low incomes, rural youth and the elderly and disabled, could be expanded. Public transport investment applied in the outer metropolitan areas and the regions can help reduce the transport disadvantage in these socio-economically vulnerable communities. This includes affordable fares and improved access to employment, education and healthcare services. This aligns with the AITPM commitment to inclusivity and fairness in the transport system.
- **Resilience** has a Limited alignment. The need for resilience is implied, but more could be done on climate change adaptation and network redundancy. The Strategy should include actions to increase the resilience of South Australia's transport systems. This includes infrastructure adaptation to severe weather events, operational flexibility during service disruptions from crashes and the development of backup network capacity. A vision led, scenario-based planning approach should be embedded into long-term investment strategy to ensure the system is robust and future-ready. This also aligns with sustainability and systems-thinking principles.
- **Technology and Innovation** has a Good alignment. The emphasis on digital-first systems, real-time data and integrated mobility reflects AITPM's support for innovation.
- **Evidence-based Planning** is Not strongly visible. No obvious mention of modelling, forecasting, or data-led scenario testing. Stronger use of evidence-based planning is recommended.
- **Linking transport and land use planning** is Not strongly visible. The Strategy needs to plan and integrate public transport with land use planning, especially in the growth areas. Public transport needs to be embedded early in the planning of new developments to ensure accessibility from day one and avoid long-term reliance on private vehicles. Coordination with the Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (GARP) and other land use frameworks are essential to deliver sustainable mobility outcomes. This recommendation complements the Strategy's draft outcomes for connected, liveable communities and supports long-term transport mode shift.

Public Transport in South Australia in 2025

Based on our research and analysis of patronage statistics, we provide the following insights about the issues and challenges to grow public transport patronage in South Australia. The following chart shows the annual ticket validations (not including free travel or special events) for the Adelaide Metro train, tram and bus services from 2019 to 2024. In the post COVID-19 period, patronage levels in 2024 have yet not returned to the 2019 levels. This decline in patronage is likely due to changes in travel patterns with a proportion of regular commuters still working from home more often than in 2019. Furthermore, the public transport services have not significantly improved in frequency, hours or coverage with only minimal changes to the timetables since 2020.
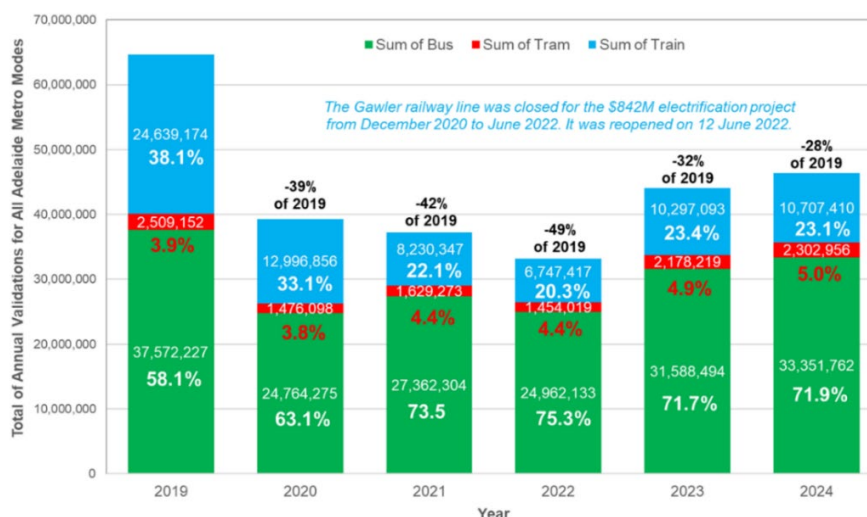
Regional Public Transport

In terms of Regional Public Transport, the State Transport Strategy document mentions the Regional Review, but it lacks details on how the regional insights will be used. It is recommended that locally designed service models, such the on-demand transport as operated as KeoRide in Mount Barker, be considered for implementation in the regional centres.

The State Transport Strategy has limited mention of equity beyond accessibility for the regions. It is suggested that a focus on fare equity, affordability, access to essential services, and how transport investment will avoid increasing inequality, especially in remote regional areas.

Recommendations for the Public Transport Strategy

AIPTM supports the key drivers for the future of public transport given in the strategy snapshot document. Furthermore, the following recommendations are provided for consideration in the development of the Public Transport Strategy. They are grouped under the broad categories for:

- Customer-focused network and service enhancements
- Accessible integrated mode stations and stops for the entire journey and the community
- Short to long term planning with open data transparency and monitoring

Customer-focused Network and Service Enhancements

- Address the issue of affordability and access for disadvantaged communities, in particular in the outer urban metropolitan areas and the regional centres. In these areas, implement on-demand transport models and innovative community hub services and Mobility as s Service (MAAS)
- Consider the demographics for all age groups in public transport network and service planning.
- Plan for a simpler bus network based on a hierarchy of services tailored to the customer needs.
- Advocate for sub-area bus service reviews and redesigns with timed transfer "hubs" connecting to high frequency bus routes to provide a more efficient network.
- Promote transport equity by ensuring underserved groups are prioritised in the service design.
- Share the network planning and service level guidelines as part of the public engagement.

Two examples of best practice in bus network and service planning are provided where the public transport strategy provides details with a hierarchy of routes tailored to each demographic area, including frequent bus corridors and on demand services for lower density areas. Both Calgary and Winnipeg are medium-sized metropolitan cities with populations similar to metropolitan Adelaide.
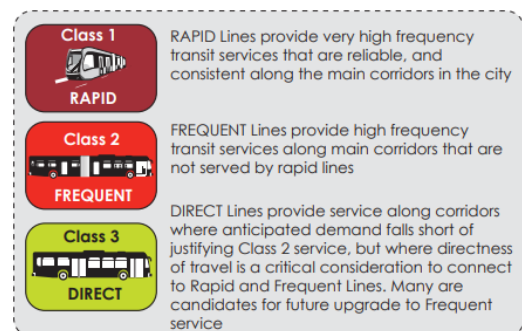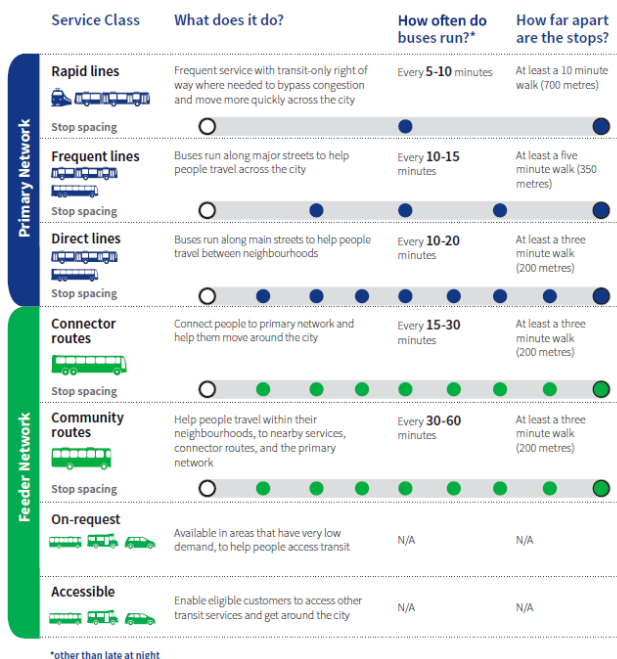
Calgary Transit's 30-Year Strategic Plan includes a staged implementation for bus and rail network, services and infrastructure upgrades. The transit strategy provides a customer-focused approach to network and service planning with a Primary Transit network. The bus network planning standards and service performance analysis are included in the report that is available on their webpage.

*The five key measures of transit service quality on the **Primary Transit Network** in Calgary, Canada are provided in this image.*

Source: https://www.calgarytransit.com/plans---projects/long-term-strategic-plans.html
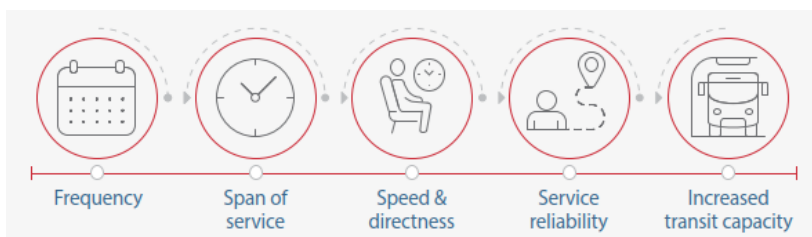
Winnipeg Transit in Canada developed a "Service Class" hierarchy as part of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan in 2021. This was used to redesign the bus network and to identify the service and infrastructure priorities to improve the public transport in the metropolitan area. On demand or "on-request" services are part of the service class hierarchy.

Accessible and Integrated Infrastructure at Interchanges, Stations and Stops

- Prepare a staged infrastructure upgrade program to improve the accessibility, safety and amenity at all interchanges, stations and stops that considers service integration.
- Conduct interchange accessibility audits to include all transport modes from Park n Ride, bus, cycling and walk access that addresses the needs of all age groups.
- Plan for accessible infrastructure that considers the demography of the customers.

At TransLink in Vancouver, Canada, a **Customer Promise** guides the engagement approach. To always put customers first for safety, time and connecting to people and places that matter the most. They support this promise by engaging regularly and openly with customers and wider community with many innovative methods to make the entire customer journey is important in the design of public transport services that considers all types of customers and their needs.
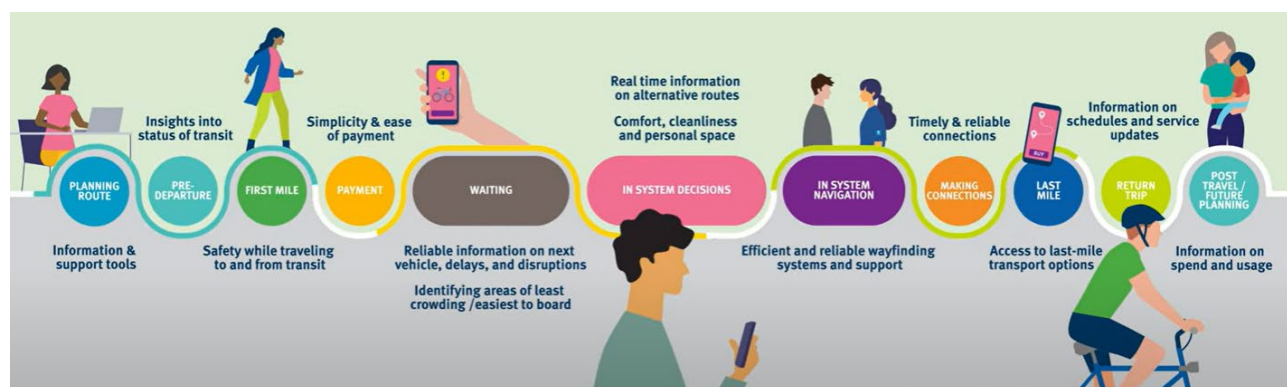

Source: TransLink, Vancouver, Canada

Short to Long Term Planning with Open Data Transparency and Monitoring

- Provide a staged implementation plan and funding and investment strategy with short, medium and long-term actions for the train, tram and bus network, services and infrastructure upgrades, including rail lines and bus routes.
- The monitoring and evaluation of new or upgraded public transport services are not mentioned with no Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or monitoring frameworks are given. It is recommended that measurable targets and milestones be established that are annually reported on to provide public transparency and accountability.
- Prepare an annual report with measurable statistics, such as patronage, service reliability and other key performance indicators to track progress and ensure accountability.
- Support technology governance, open data standards, and real-time user feedback loops.
- Technology is in the future vision of the Transport Strategy. However, it lacks any operational details, such the data governance, interoperability between systems and the role of Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) and micromobility to support public transport. It is recommended that open data standards, MaaS pilot programs and real-time user feedback mechanisms be considered.

Many public transport agencies publish their annual public transport service performance reports on websites as shown with these best practice examples from Perth, Western Australia and at TransLink in Vancouver and Calgary, Alberta in Canada.

https://www.pta.wa.gov.au/about-us/priorities-and-performance/transport-performance
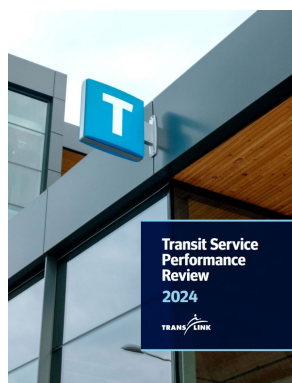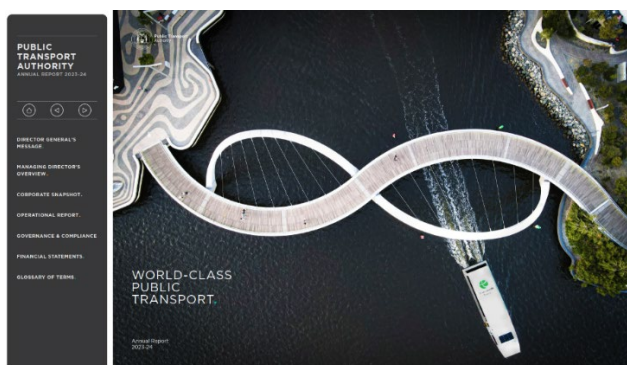
https://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/documents/plans-and-projects/managing-the-transit-network/tspr/2024_transit_service_performance_review.pdf

https://www.calgarytransit.com/content/dam/transit/plans---projects/2024%20RouteAhead%20Annual%20Status%20Report.pdf

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Attachment 1: AITPM Policy and Principles Platform

AITPM POLICY AND PRINCIPLES PLATFORM

WHY ARE TRANSPORT SYSTEMS IMPORTANT?

The impact of a successful transport system shows up as healthy people, communities and economies. Transport links and activates places, enabling people and businesses to access:

- Goods and services
- Jobs
- Education and training
- Health services
- Entertainment, sport and recreation
- Friend and family networks

AITPM is committed to educating governments and the community on the importance of successful transport systems – and, in turn, a properly resourced Transport Community – in ensuring healthy and prosperous outcomes for Australians.

AITPM POLICY AND PRINCIPLES PLATFORM

OUR PURPOSE

AITPM's purpose is to raise the profile of the Transport Community. The community's practitioners and stakeholders are critical participants in delivering a sustainable, efficient, accessible and safe transport system.

Every day people across Australia's Transport Community identify, investigate, plan, develop and implement solutions to achieve this. In doing its work, the aims of the Transport Community include:

- Supporting a switch to sustainable transport choices, to help reduce Australia's emissions and lessen transport's impact on the environment
- Growing national and community prosperity by enabling the safe and efficient movement of people, goods and services
- Delivering inclusive transport services that provide access to opportunities for all users
- Building the resilience of communities and businesses by ensuring transport networks remain safe and connected under changing external conditions, including natural disasters
- Integrating the movement of people and vehicles within flourishing places in different geographic settings, from cities and towns to rural and regional areas.

AITPM POLICY AND PRINCIPLES PLATFORM

SUCCESSFUL TRANSPORT SYSTEMS ARE CREATED THROUGH

1. Integrated transport and land use planning at all levels, from future-focused strategic planning to the implementation of site-specific developments
2. The application of sound, long-term, non-partisan and evidence-based public policy, with cross-sectoral support
3. The systematic collection, monitoring and evaluation of transport data to support decision-making
4. The consistent application of a range of appropriate contemporary modelling tools by suitably resourced professionals
5. A culture of research and innovation that is collaborative across sectors and disciplines
6. Genuine, inclusive engagement, collaboration and co-design activities encompassing all communities and stakeholders
7. A holistic 'Safe Systems' approach covering all transport infrastructure and operations, and the interactions between people, vehicles and the transport environment
8. Sustainable and transparent funding and pricing models that support desired strategic transport outcomes
9. A diverse and welcoming community of transport professionals that has the capacity to handle the demands placed on it
10. Capable transport practitioners with the qualifications, skills and experience to plan, design, engineer, deliver, operate and manage Australia's transport systems
11. The commitment of governments and industry to educate and support the next generation of transport professionals.

- As the national association for transport professionals, AITPM leads the Transport Community in connecting, collaborating and delivering, developing industry skills, capability and knowledge as we create successful transport systems together.

We are the collective voice of the Transport Community, and we advocate for delivering sustainable, efficient, accessible and safe transport systems

AITPM POLICY AND PRINCIPLES PLATFORM

WHO IS PART OF THE TRANSPORT COMMUNITY?

The Australian Transport Community is made up of professionals from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds, including:

- Transport planners
- Traffic and transport engineers
- Land use, transport and traffic modellers
- Road safety practitioners
- Transport economists
- Road and public transport infrastructure designers
- Active transport specialists
- Travel behaviour change specialists
- Transport researchers, educators and engagement professionals
- Transport policy specialists.

To design, deliver and manage transport systems, this community of transport professionals connects to a broader network of professions and suppliers covering these areas of focus

- Urban and regional planning
- Transport and traffic data collection and analysis
- Modelling programs and resources
- Traffic management and control
- Intelligent transport systems
- Infrastructure supply, engineering and construction
- Transport service operations – from rail through to micromobility.