

Public Transport Survey

Attitudes and Opinions by RAC Members and the Wider
Community on Perth's Metropolitan Public Transport
System



RAC members are happier

The RAC

The RAC is WA's leading membership organisation representing the interests of 630,000 members in the areas of mobility and safety.

Traditionally concentrating on motoring issues, the RAC realises that the interests of our members are more diverse – they are concerned about transport. Many of our members choose not to drive and this choice should be supported and made worthwhile.

Road safety remains the keystone of the RAC passionately representing all road users – providing information to members on how to remain safe on our roads and lobbying government for positive change.

The RAC also advocates on behalf of members for more action to be taken in the community safety areas of burglary, car theft and road rage.

We are also becoming increasingly concerned at the effects of global warming and the adverse effects on the planet. We are working at not only making the RAC's business operations environmentally-friendly but giving our members information so we can all do our bit to arrest the harm being caused to the planet.

Summary

The RAC conducted a survey of its members and the wider community in March 2008 in conjunction with media partners the Community Newspaper Group and Channel 7 Perth, to ascertain opinions of the metropolitan public transport system.

The RAC found that:

- 47% of those surveyed thought the overall public transport system was excellent or good.
- 55% of respondents used public transport daily or on most days and overwhelmingly for work purposes.
- The benefits of usage most often cited were lower cost (more pronounced on the Armadale and Midland lines), less stress by avoiding traffic, environmental advantages (more prevalent on the Fremantle line) and no need to find parking.
- Of the 77% of bus users who cited they had difficulties or concerns on the bus, the biggest concern is the frequency of buses followed by poor connections, reliability, overcrowding and conditions on the bus.
- Overall, 68% of train users said they had difficulties or concerns with their most frequented train service. The most cited difficulty was overcrowding on trains, followed by lack of parking, service not frequent enough, personal safety concerns and service being unreliable.

The recommendations of the RAC include:

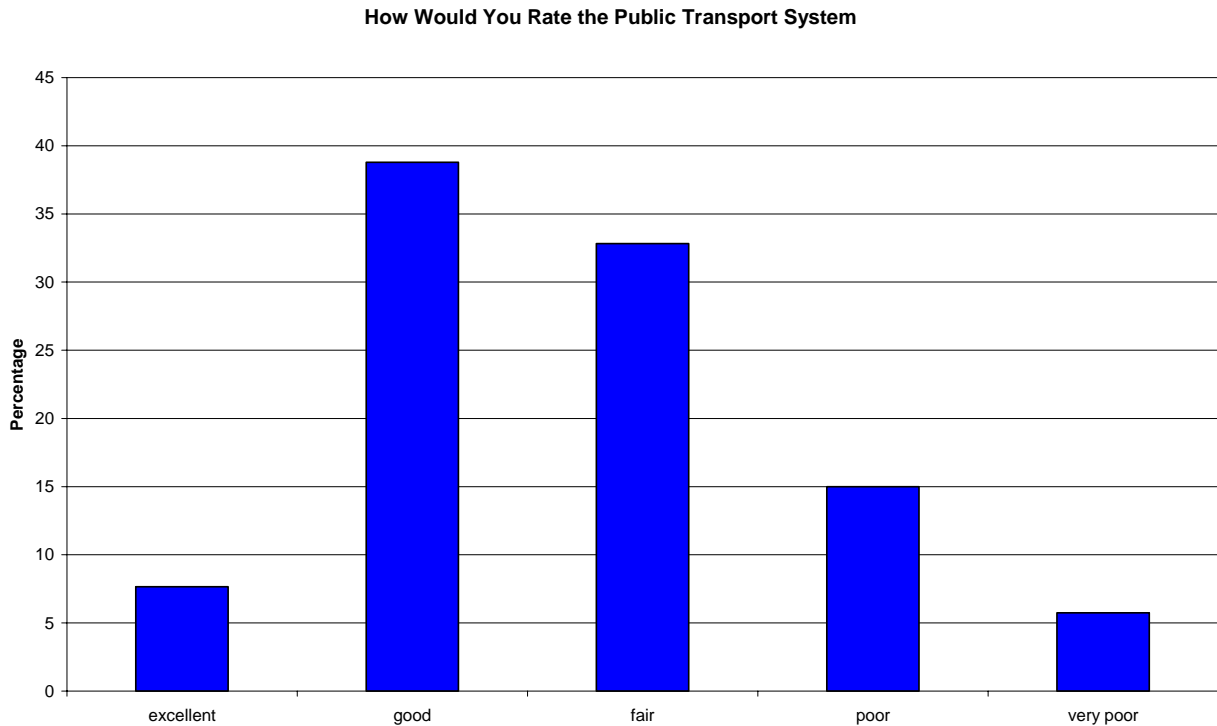
- More trains be obtained to alleviate congestion
- Bus routes be examined to ensure peak efficiency especially with connections to train services
- Parking upgrades planned for selected stations on the Armadale and Joondalup lines be completed
- Car parking allocation and the efficiency of buses feeding into the Mandurah line be investigated and changes implemented
- That a security and safety audit of all train lines is conducted, especially with regard to the Armadale and Midland lines



Overall results

How Do You Rate the Public Transport System?

Almost half (47%) of people who responded to the survey thought that Perth's metropolitan public transport system was excellent or good, with 20% saying that the system was poor or very poor. This shows that while most are happy with the quality of the public transport system overall, a significant proportion say they have concerns.

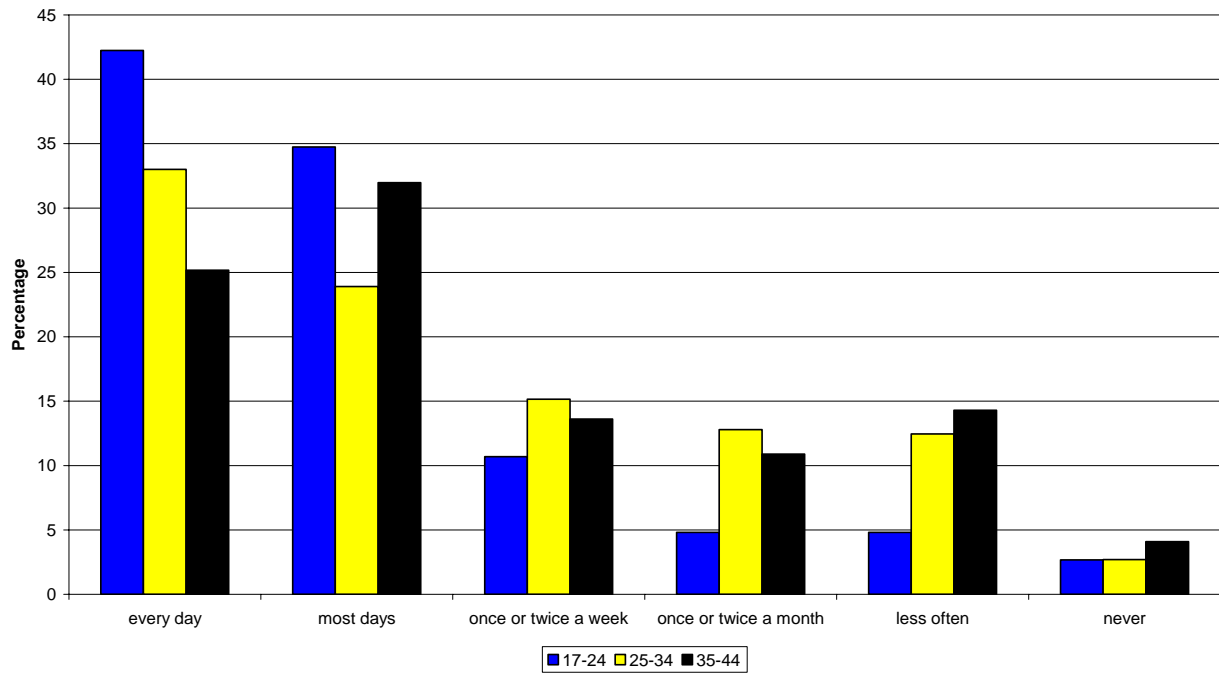


How Often do People Use Public transport?

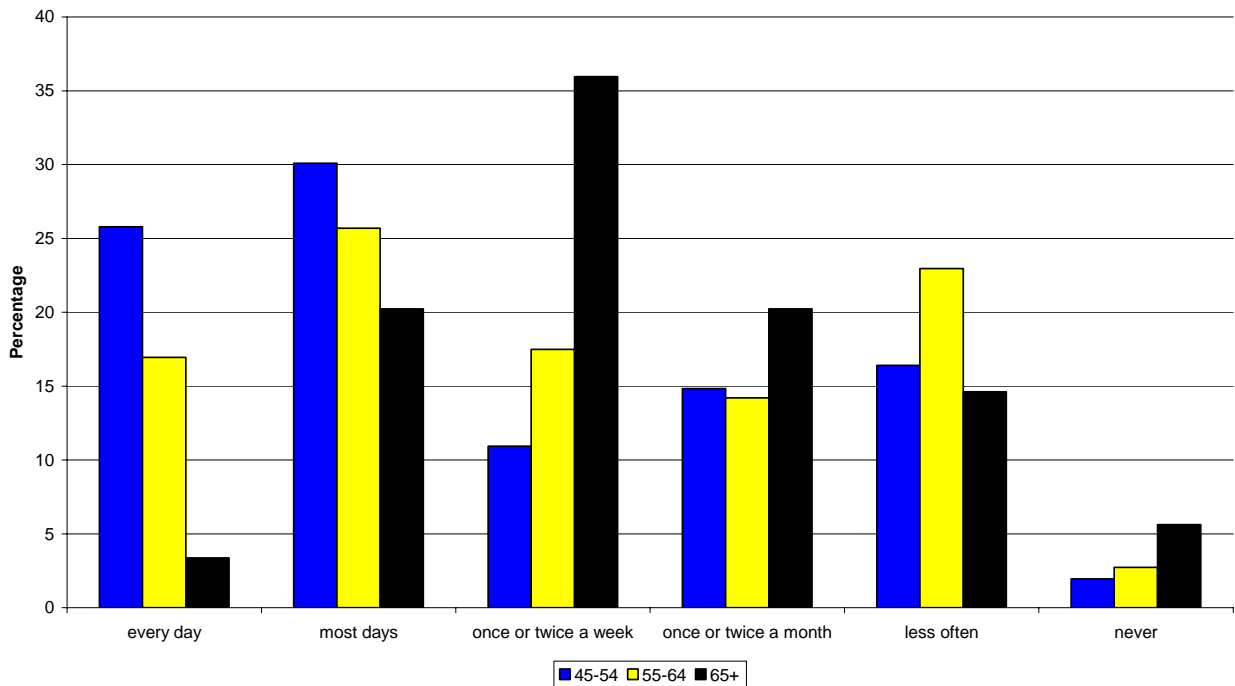
The survey found that 55% of respondents used the train or bus (questions about ferry usage were not asked) either every day or most days. 15% used it once or twice a week, 12% once or twice a month, 14% less often than that and only 4% did not use public transport at all.

When correlated by age, younger demographics are more likely to utilise public transport. Those 65 years of age and over however are most likely to use public transport once or twice a week. This highlights the importance of adequate transport systems for seniors, allowing them to be more involved in their local community.

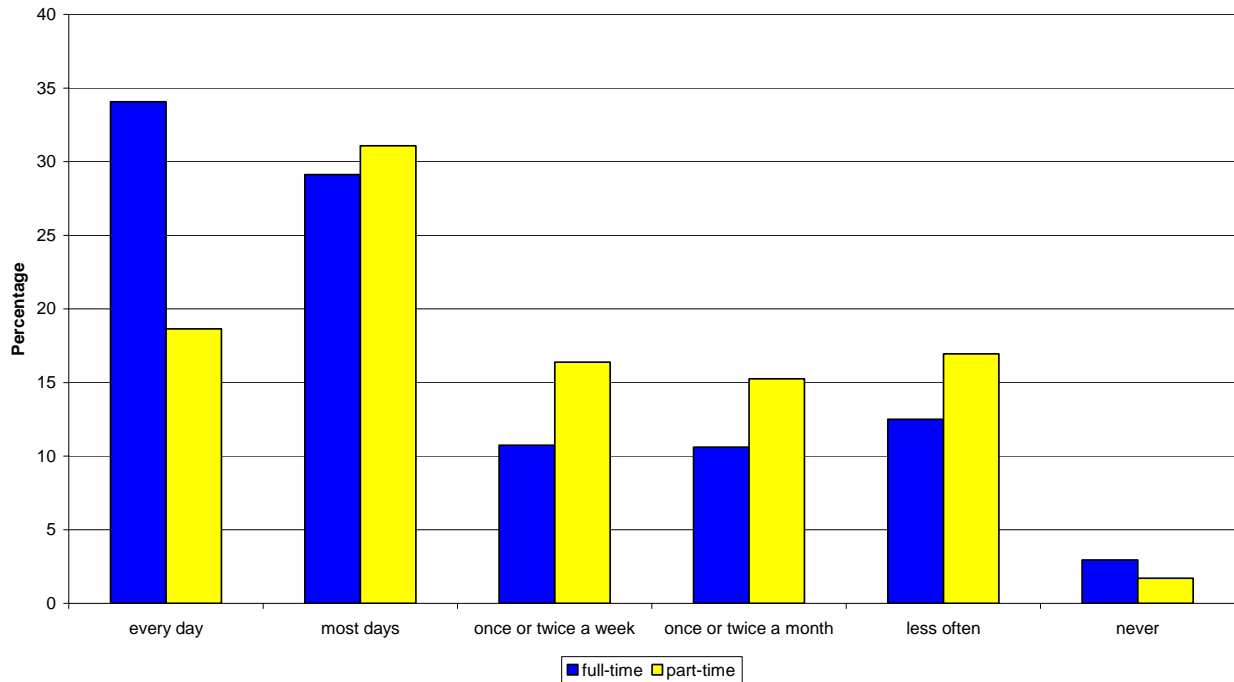
How Often Do You Use Public Transport - By Age 17 - 44



How Often Do You Use Public Transport - By Age 45 - 65+



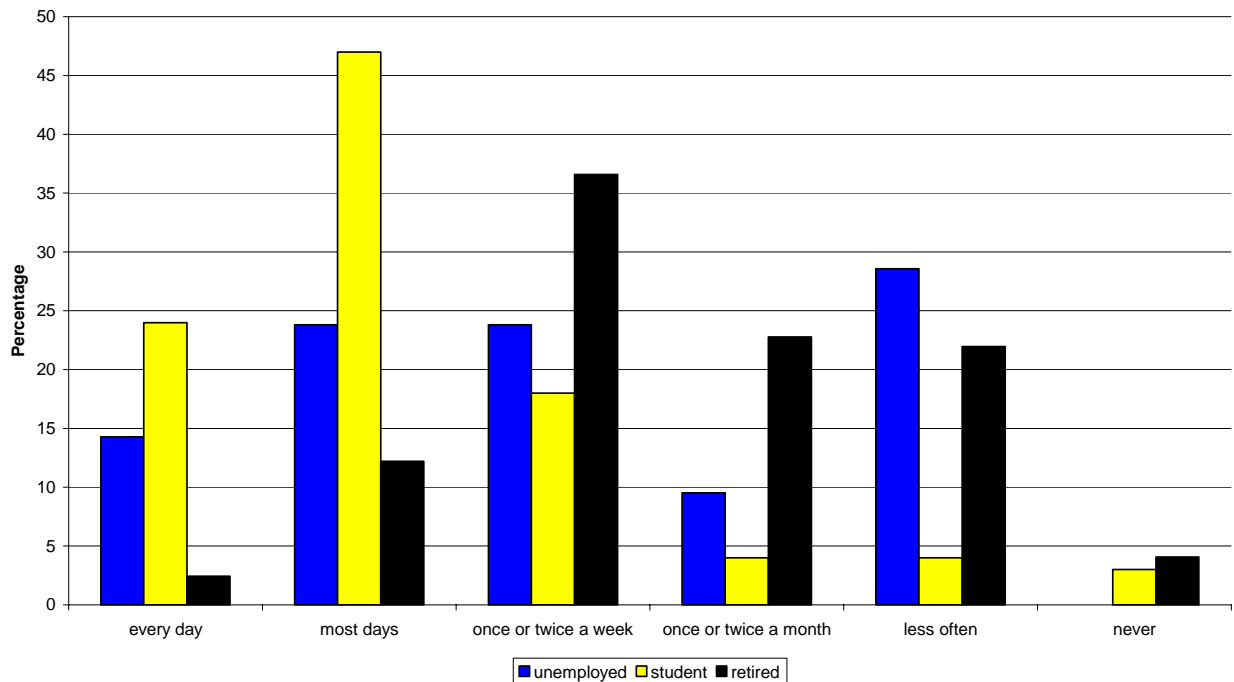
How Often Do You Use Public Transport - Full Time v Part Time



When looking at employment status, full time workers are most likely to utilise public transport every day and part time workers are most likely to use the train or the bus on most days.

When looking at those not in the work force, students are likely to use public transport either every day or most days, whereas retired respondents use public transport less frequently.

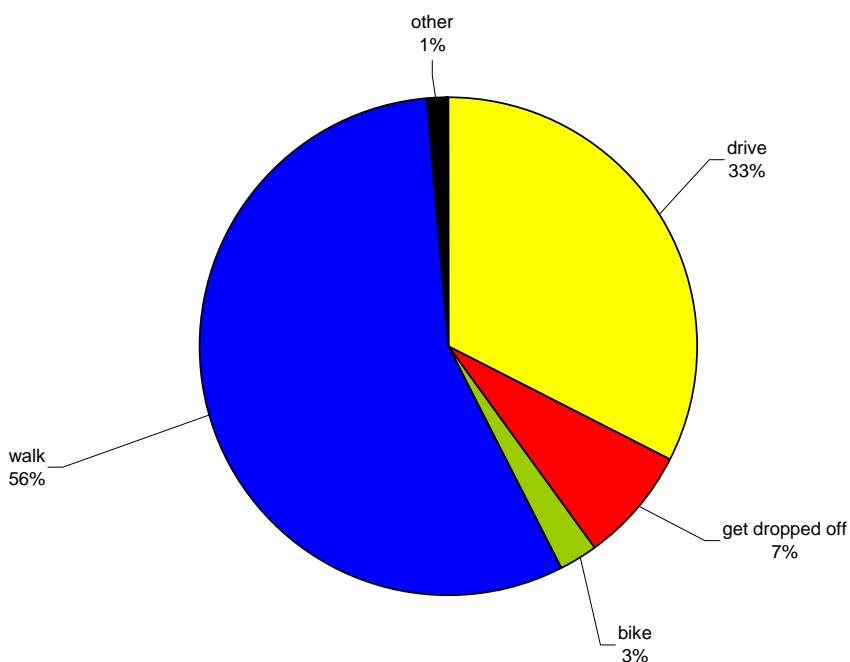
How Often do You use Public Transport - Employment Status



Overwhelmingly, the most cited reason for using public transport was for work purposes (56%), followed by other essential services (20%), education (8%), shopping (6%) and other (10%).

Surprisingly, 56% of those surveyed usually walk to the beginning of their journey with one-third driving – most probably to a train station or bus interchange. With one of the biggest concerns for train travellers (as seen in the next section) being a lack of parking, it is important not only to expand the number of car parking bays, but by increasing bus frequency to the train station, take pressure off local roads and car parks. The adequacy of bus services was the most cited concern with the bus system.

How Do You Typically Get to The Start of Your Journey?



On average survey respondents reported walking 573 metres to the beginning of their public transport journey.

Our results found that those who drove to the beginning of their public transport journey were most likely to take the train, whereas those who walked invariably took the bus. However, those who walked to the train were likely to walk further than those who walked to the bus.

Major Benefits to Using Public Transport

Whilst acknowledging that one reason for using public transport is for the resulting environmental benefits, the most cited reason for using trains and buses is that it is cheaper than driving and easier than finding somewhere to park a car. With respondents being able to provide multiple answers, the most cited were:

- Lower cost than driving (54%)
- Less stress by avoiding traffic (35%)
- Environmental benefits (29%)
- No need to find parking (23%)
- Faster than driving (13%)
- Easy to use/reliable/convenient (11%)

The economic benefit of public transport is the number one reason for travelling by the bus or train. It may be worthwhile for the government and relevant agencies to investigate lower costs as a way to encourage increased public transport patronage.

Concerns with Public Transport overall

Of public transport users surveyed, 82% said they had at least one concern or problem with public transport in the Perth metropolitan area.

When asked how they would make the system better, most respondents said that buses and trains should adhere to timetables, followed by increasing the frequency of services, better security, reducing the costs and providing better connections between buses and trains.

Interestingly, the highest response across all age brackets was for buses and trains to keep to the timetable.

Cost was the second most selected issue for respondents between 17 -24 years (following closer adherence to timetables), and the third most selected issue for those aged between 25 – 34 (following timetables and more frequent services).

In fact those who responded that they used public transport 'less often' or 'never' were more likely to say that more security would make them use it more often. Those aged between 17 – 24 were more likely than other age groups, to say reduced cost of travel, would make them use public transport more often.

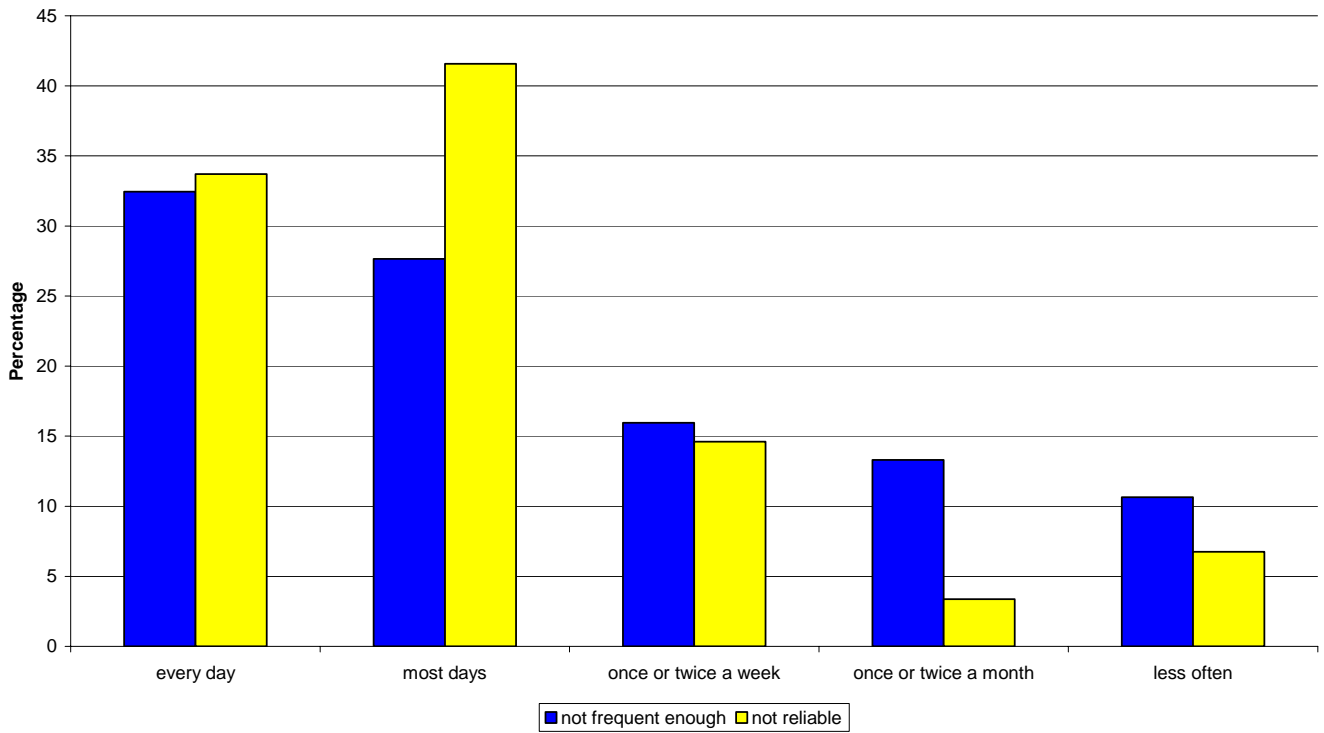
Bus Usage

According to survey respondents, 58% of bus users ride the bus every day, or most days of the week.

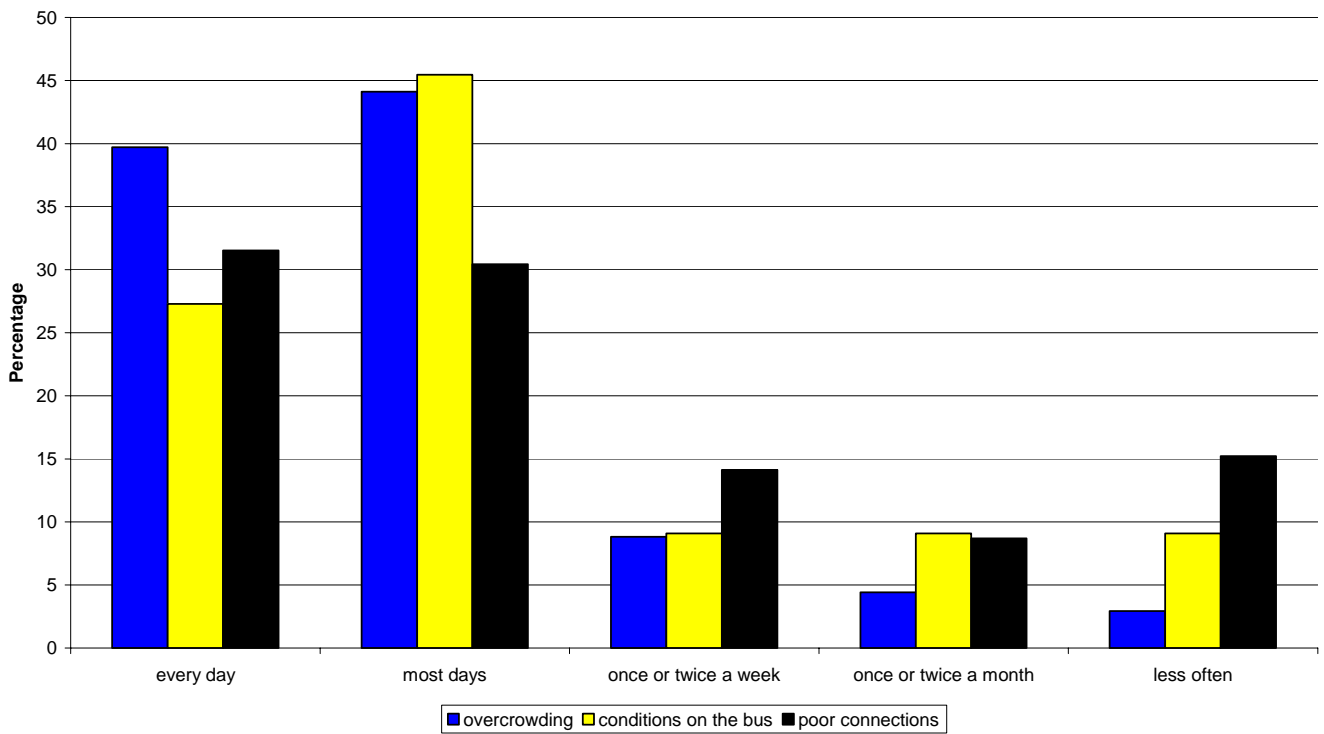
Of the 77% of bus users who cited they had difficulties or concerns on the bus, the biggest was the frequency of buses followed by poor connections, reliability, overcrowding and conditions on the bus.



Bus Service - Difficulties - Frequency and Reliability



Bus Service - Difficulties - Overcrowding and Conditions on the Bus



It is important that the government look at bus availability and certainly connections with train services. As we shall see in the following section on trains, car parking ranks highly in the list of concerns held by train users.

Poor connections were most likely cited by those survey respondents who used the bus and train, as opposed to just bus users. However respondents living in the inner metropolitan area thought overcrowding was a major difficulty with buses and did not cite connection issues. This may be because buses into the city invariably originate in the wider metropolitan area and are full, when they pass through inner city suburbs.

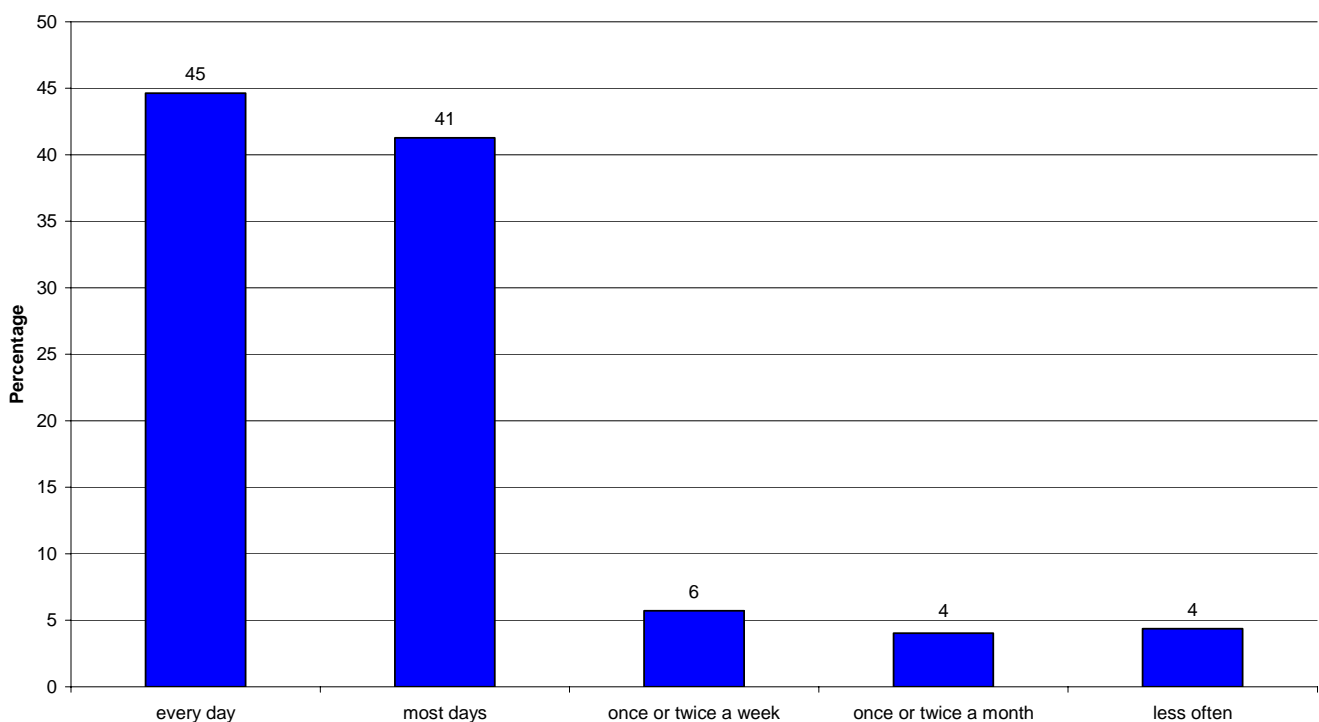
People who do not have confidence in the buses will either drive to their final destination (work, school etc) or to the train – which places additional pressure on car parks. The RAC also understands that many people along the Joondalup Line who drive to a train station car park only to find it full, may try one or two more stations towards the city, and finding them full, give up and drive into the city.

Train Usage

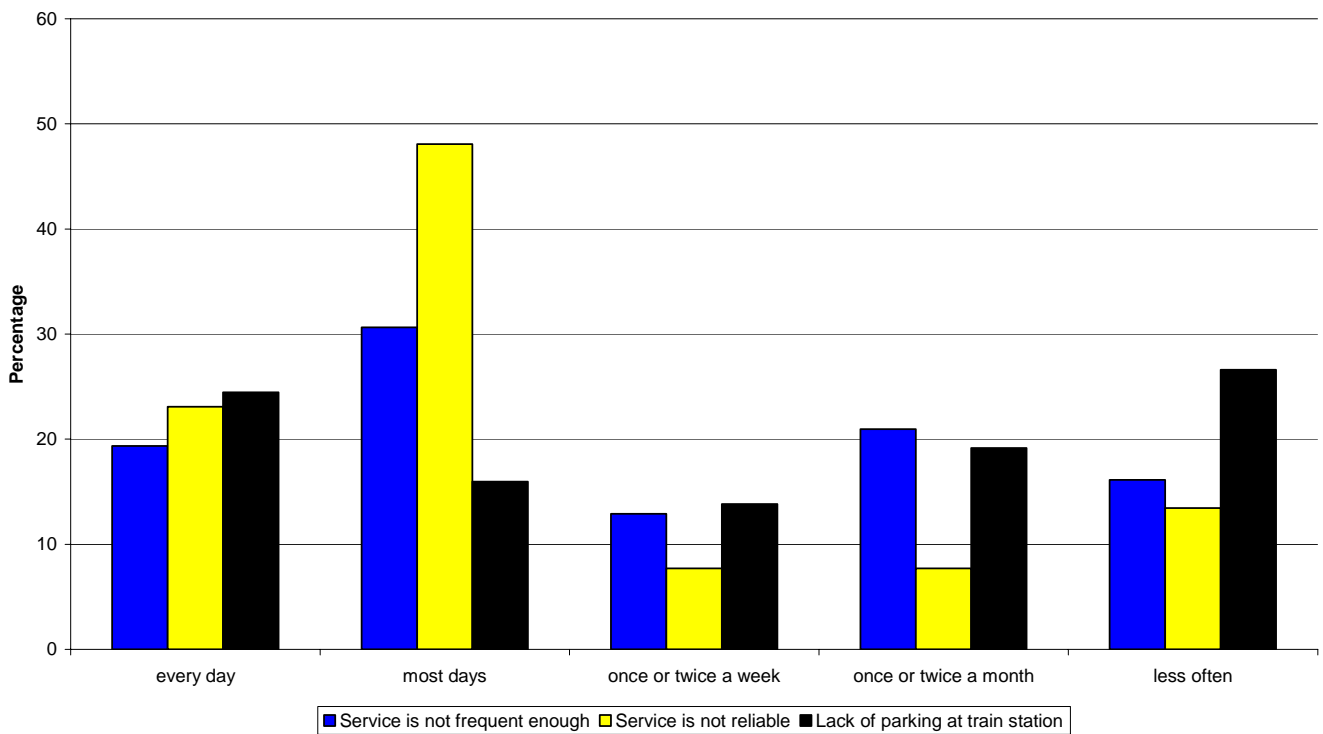
Overall, 68% of train users said they had difficulties or concerns with their most frequented train service. The most cited difficulty was overcrowding on trains, followed by lack of parking, service not frequent enough, personal safety concerns and service is unreliable.

Moreover, 86% of people who either travel every day or most days cited that overcrowding was a concern. Those who catch the train less frequently also thought overcrowding was issue.

Train users Overall - Overcrowding/not enough seats

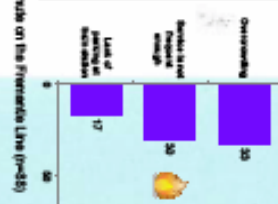


Train Concerns Overall - Frequency of Service, Reliability and parking

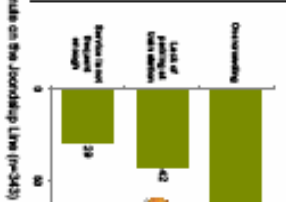


Interestingly, 45% of those who walked to the train said that they had at least one issue with the train, followed by those who drove. This seems to correlate with overcrowding being the biggest concern because walkers would not have an issue with parking.

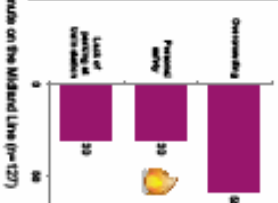
Those who responded that they used the train 'less often' were more likely to cite personal safety concerns or lack of parking at train stations as issues with using the train.



Q: Do you have any difficulties or concerns?
Q: What difficulties or concerns do you have?

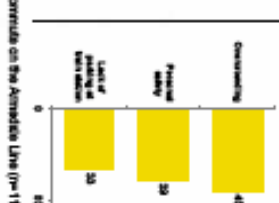
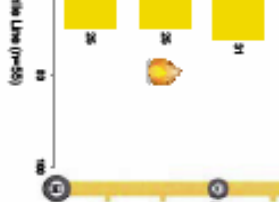
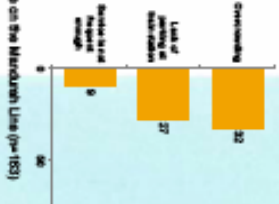


Q: Do you have any difficulties or concerns?
Q: What difficulties or concerns do you have?



Q: Do you have any difficulties or concerns?
Q: What difficulties or concerns do you have?

Q: Do you have any difficulties or concerns?
Q: What difficulties or concerns do you have?



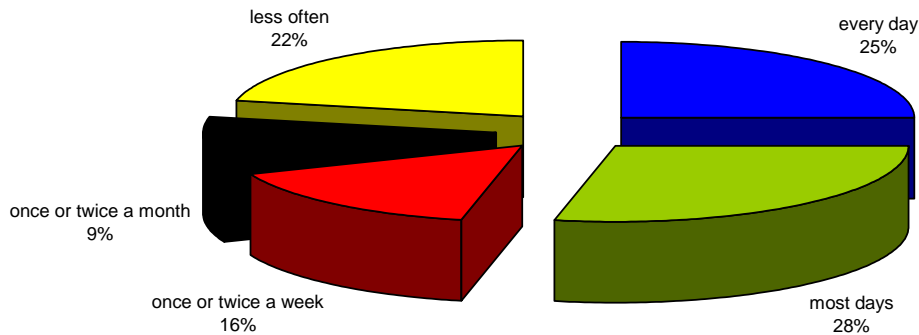
Q: Do you have any difficulties or concerns?
Q: What difficulties or concerns do you have?



Armadale Line

53% of Armadale line respondents reported catching the train either every day or most days.

Armadale Train Users - By Frequency of travel



Of those who travel on the Armadale Line, the most mentioned benefit of public transport was low cost, following by less stress, no need to find parking and the associated environmental advantages. In fact of all the train lines (Armadale, Fremantle, Joondalup, Mandurah, Midland and Thornlie), for those travelling on the Armadale and Midland Lines, cost is cited by a larger proportion of travellers than those on other lines. This is important when determining the motivation for using public transport.

There are obviously different motivators for utilising public transport which all need to be taken into account when determining how to encourage increased patronage.

71% of Armadale Line passengers stated that they had concerns with the train with the top five issues being:

- Overcrowding
- Personal safety concerns
- Lack of parking
- Cleanliness of the trains
- Service not reliable

It is also important to note that users in the top three issues of concern for all lines, Armadale and Midland both cited personal safety concerns as the number two issue, following overcrowding.

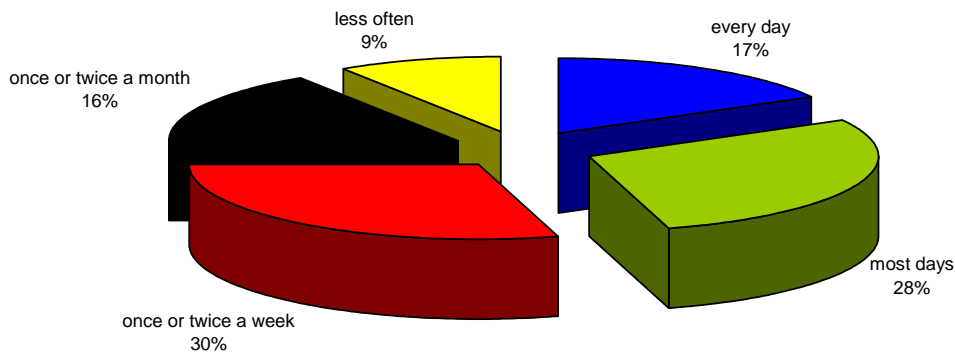
39% of Armadale line users rated the overall public transport system as excellent (7%) or good (32%). 60% of Armadale Line users only catch the train, with 40% also catching the bus as part of their journey.

Those who use the Armadale, Sherwood, Gosnells, Maddington or Victoria Park stations are more likely to cite personal safety concerns.

Fremantle Line

On the Fremantle line, only 17% of those surveyed catch it daily, with 28% catching it most days a week and 46% catching it either once or twice a week (30%) or once or twice a month (16%).

Fremantle Train Users - Frequency of Travel



59% of Fremantle Train users stated they had at least one concern with the train with the top 5 being:

- Overcrowding
- Infrequent service
- Lack of parking
- Service not reliable
- Personal safety concerns

The biggest benefit to using the train is seen as lower costs, followed by the environmental advantages, less stress, no need to look for parking and as a way to reduce traffic on the roads. In fact the response 'to reduce traffic on the roads' is higher on the Fremantle line than on other lines.

The most common reason for using the train is for work (34%), for other essential services (31%) and for education (14%). Interestingly 70% of those surveyed said that they walked to the beginning of their typical public transport journey.

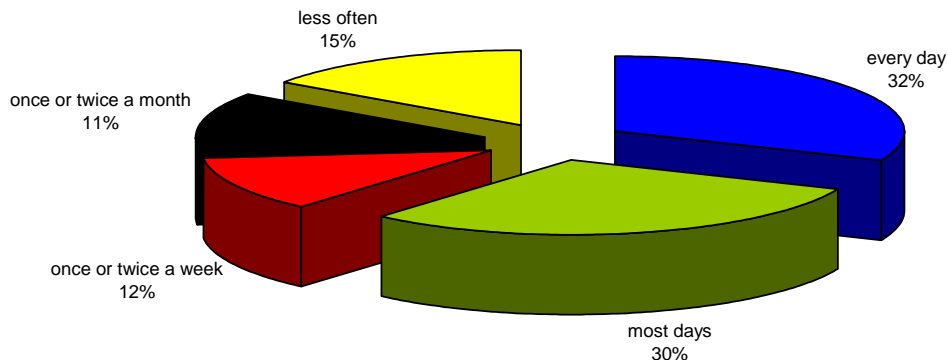
50% of Fremantle line users rated the overall public transport system as excellent (14%) or good (36%).

Those who catch the train on the Fremantle line are also the most environmentally conscious, with these survey respondents more likely to state environmental advantages to using public transport.

Joondalup

Of those who travel on the Joondalup line, 61% use it daily or most days per week.

Joondalup Train Users - Frequency of Travel



The most cited benefit of using the train was less stress, closely followed by low cost, environmental advantages and no need to find parking.

However 75% of those travelling on the Joondalup line stated they had concerns or difficulties with the train which included:

- Overcrowding
- Lack of parking
- Infrequent service
- Service not reliable
- Personal safety concerns

Two-thirds of Joondalup line travellers use the train for work purposes.

The concern with parking is probably exemplified by 46% of the survey's respondents walking to the train station and 40% driving. 80% of these problems are perceived to take place in the early morning.

45% of Joondalup line users rate overall public transport as excellent (6%) or good (39%).

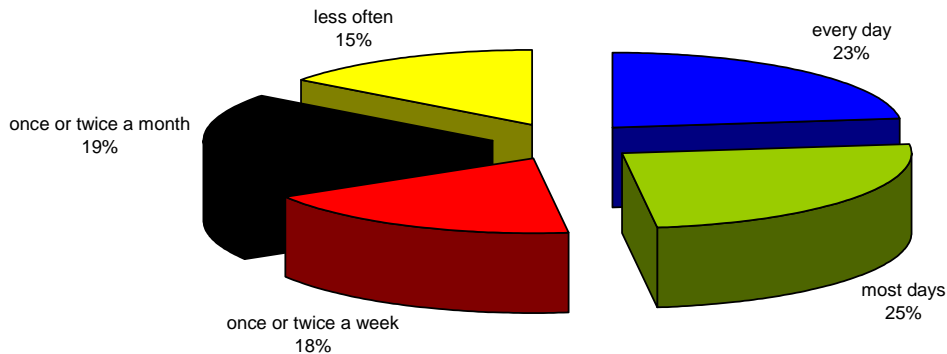
Respondents said better services / adherence to the timetable, more frequent services and lower costs of travelling, would encourage them to use it more.

Those who use the Edgewater or Greenwood Stations are more likely to mention parking as a concern.

Mandurah Line

48% of Mandurah line users catch the train daily, or most days per week.

Mandurah Train Users - Frequency of Travel



The most cited reason for using the train was lower cost, followed by less stress than driving, environmental advantages, no need to find parking and it is faster than driving. 48% of users catch the train for work, with 25% using it for other essential services.

43% of users drive to the train station with 46% walking.

58% of survey respondents stated they had a concern with the train with the top 5 being:

- Overcrowding
- Lack of parking
- Infrequent service
- Service not reliable
- Personal safety concerns

Not surprisingly 72% of survey respondents come across these issues in the early morning with the solution being seen as the provision of more carriages, adherence to timetables and more frequent services.

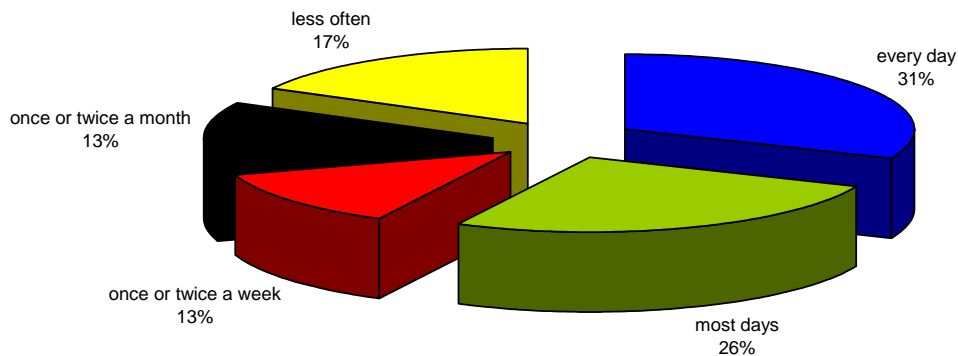
60% of users thought the public transport system overall was either excellent (12%) or good (48%).

A greater adherence to timetables and more frequent services would encourage increased patronage. Those who use the Mandurah, Cockburn Central or Murdoch stations are more likely to say parking is a concern.

Midland Line

57% of Midland line travellers use the train either every day or most days.

Midland Train Users - Frequency of Travel



The most cited benefit for using the train is the lower cost, followed by the environmental advantages, no need to find parking, it is faster than driving and is easy to use.

73% of Midland Line passengers said they had concerns with the train with the top 5 responses being:

- Overcrowding
- Personal safety concerns
- Lack of parking
- Infrequent service
- Service not reliable

57% of survey respondents used the train for work purposes. 46% of passengers drive to the station with 52% walking.

With regard to personal safety issues the vast majority of those who cited personal safety as a concern, said it was more pronounced when either waiting for the train, or on the train itself.

50% of Midland train travellers rated the overall public transport system as either excellent (9%) or good (41%).

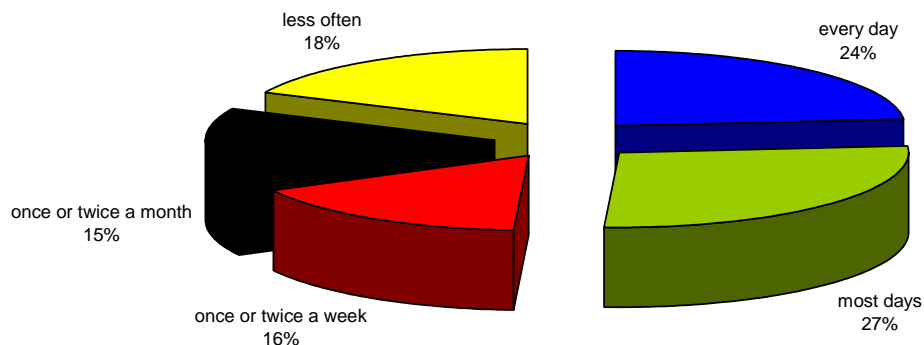
38% of respondents said that they would use public transport more if there was a greater adherence to timetables, more frequent services and more security.

Midland station passengers, as well as Armadale passengers, are most concerned about their personal security.

Thornlie Line

51% of survey respondents use the train daily or most days a week.

Thornlie Train Users - Frequency of Travel



The biggest benefit to catching the train was seen as the low cost, no need to find parking, less stress, faster than driving with environmental advantages the fifth most cited reason.

51% of Thornlie users used the train for work.

67% of Thornlie train travellers said they had concerns with the train with the top 5 being:

- Overcrowding
- Personal safety concerns
- Infrequent service
- Service not reliable
- Lack of parking

55% of travellers walk to the station, with 29% driving and 13% being dropped off.

These concerns were most pronounced either in the early morning or late afternoon, presumably with people travelling to and from work.

49% rated the overall public transport system as excellent (2%) or good (47%).

Respondents said that adherence to the timetable, more security and more frequent services would encourage them to use the train more.

Local Government Consultation

As part of its consultative process, the RAC also discussed public transport issues with Local Governments who were well placed to advise us of specific local concerns.

We were able to meet / talk with representatives of the following councils:

- o Town of Bassendean
- o City of Cockburn
- o City of Fremantle
- o City of Gosnells
- o City of Joondalup
- o Town of Kwinana
- o City of Mandurah
- o City of Nedlands
- o Shire of Peppermint Grove
- o City of Perth
- o City of Stirling
- o City of Subiaco
- o City of Swan
- o Town of Vincent

The issues raised include:

- o Potential passengers may not always know how to catch public transport – and so don't.
- o There is a lack of timetables, route information and shelters at many bus stops.
- o Lack of parking is a concern however some councils expressed the view that cheap parking discouraged people from walking or using a bus.
- o Bicycle facilities at train stations are largely inadequate and one suggestion was made to have on certain trains a carriage without seats which cyclists can use without disrupting the journey of non-riding passengers.
- o Perceptions of safety – whether they are accurate or not – makes it difficult for people to use public transport, especially at night.
- o The frequency of bus transport is disappointing.
- o Some councils expressed an overall lack of transport options existed in their area.
- o Many councils want a CAT bus system to break the reliance on car usage but cannot afford to do so.
- o The Perth Busport and Wellington Street Bus Stations are not consumer friendly and certainly does not encourage public transport usage by visitors to Perth.
- o Bus frequency seems to decline after 6pm but people are working longer hours meaning getting home by public transport is made more difficult.
- o Car parks along the Joondalup train line are filled by those who live close to the line (and who could easily catch a bus or walk) thus discouraging commuters who live further away.
- o People wanting to travel east – west cannot do so as easily as those who travel north – south (i.e. into and out of the City).
- o Perception of public transport being slower and less convenient is difficult to break.
- o There are large gaps between stations on the Joondalup and Mandurah train lines.
- o Buses into Midland station for Hills residents are poor so most drive either into Midland or all the way to their final destination (usually Perth).
- o There is a stigma attached to public transport users that may stop people for considering catching the train or bus.



Recommendations

The RAC is particularly pleased with the government's commitment to increasing the mobility of RAC members in the Perth metropolitan area. We acknowledge that the State Government has ordered additional rail cars (15 'B-Series' railcar sets) and we eagerly await their utilisation to alleviate congestion on the rail system. We are also pleased that additional parking at the Armadale, Edgewater and Greenwood stations is planned in the 2008-2009 state Budget. These three stations were also identified by this survey.

We are also pleased that a one year trial of a CAT bus service for Joondalup has also been announced in the state Budget 2008-2009 and we hope that if it is successful, a similar system is extended to other councils where it would benefit both RAC members and the wider community.

The government should also be pleased with the construction of the Southern Rail Link to Mandurah which has allowed RAC members a viable alternative to driving into the City for work, socialising and attending educational facilities.

However whilst we congratulate the government for what has been done and for what is planned over the next financial year, there remain barriers to increased use of public transport. As such the government should consider the following:

- The rail car sets on order where possible should augment existing rolling stock and not with a view to replacing it.
- Bus routes should be examined to ensure peak efficiency is being realised – particularly in early morning and late afternoon.
- We understand that some buses have been removed from service, or replaced, due to the construction of the Mandurah train line. As a result some of our more senior members now find it difficult to move around the community as once they would have. It is important that the needs of local residents are catered for in any route alterations with full community consultation taking place.
- That a security and safety audit of all train lines is conducted, especially with regard to the Armadale and Midland lines. This audit has been called for by the RAC for the past two years and it is important this occurs immediately. It is also important that security does not necessarily equate to more guards and more CCTV networks, but simple and effective means of crime prevention such as designing out crime initiatives.
- Parking on the Mandurah line needs to be audited at the same time that bus route changes are investigated. If bus services to Mandurah line stations are not increased, then parking needs to be in a bid to arrest the number of cars on major arterial roads into Perth during peak times causing congestion.
- Travelsmart be expanded geographically so travellers are better informed as to how and use public transport in their local area.

The RAC is keen to ensure that the mobility needs of our members, and their families, are adequately and effectively catered for. It is important that whether by car, train, bus or on foot, RAC members can move freely, and safely.

RAC Advocacy
832 Wellington Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005
rac.com.au
advocacy@rac.com.au

