

Better Community Buses project



Project overview

The Better Community Buses project was part of Mount Alexander Shire Council's work to promote an age-friendly community, conducted in partnership with Maldon Neighbourhood Centre and Castlemaine Community House.

The project aims to improve community transport services for older people, and to provide a collaborative model of community transport buses.

It also seeks to enhance the independence and social connectedness of older residents and improve community awareness of transport services.

Project description

The project trained a team of volunteer drivers to support a door-to-door community transport service within Maldon, Castlemaine and surrounding towns. Older people are transported to social activities, appointments, shopping excursions and other activities.

The process identified gaps in transport services, and consulted with older people in the community to determine their needs. Older people co-designed the pilot program to better meet the needs of the community.

Project model

- As well as using local research, the project also examined community transport models being implemented elsewhere.
- The project brought all providers of community transport together to analyse current services and collaborate on solutions.
- Volunteer drivers were recruited through the Maldon Neighbourhood Centre Newsletter and through press releases in the local paper
- A pilot project was developed to trial and evaluate a model of integrated community bus transport.
- RACV Driver Safety Training and Applied First Aid training were delivered to 11 volunteer drivers aged between 62 and 74 years.
- During the pilot, 10 volunteers drove regularly for the community transport service, delivering 161 passenger trips.
- Three volunteers participated in monthly working group meetings during the pilot phase.
- The project team worked with transport providers to inform the community about existing and new services.
- Existing providers were engaged to identify how they can better meet community needs with a sustainable business model.
- The project team also determined the feasibility of the options discussed.

Budget

Total project cost	\$30,000
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Project challenges

Project challenges included understanding the transport needs across Mount Alexander Shire and then creating a timetable and route that could provide effective services.

The transport needs survey showed that there was no single route, day or time that would suit a majority of people.

Other challenges included creating sustainable partnerships with other organisations.

Project outcomes

- Addressing the identified concern of older people in Mount Alexander Shire regarding frequency and accessibility of transport services by developing a regular community transport service in the shire.
- Development of a brochure to communicate local transport options in Mount Alexander.

Project sustainability

The project is now being run by Maldon Neighbourhood Centre, and has close working relationships with other organisations who manage existing transport resources in Mt Alexander Shire.

An underutilised bus has been acquired to allow the project to continue to provide transport services.

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