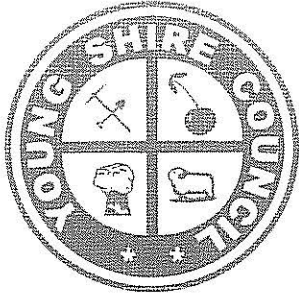


**Submission
No 121**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Young Shire Council
Name: Councillor Stuart Freudenstein
Position: Mayor
Date Received: 18/05/2012



Young Shire Council

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



Locked Bag 5

Town Hall
Boorowa Street
YOUNG NSW 2594

18th May, 2012

Mr Andrew Gee MP
The Chair,
State and Regional Development Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000

RE: INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Dear Mr Gee MP,

On behalf of the Young Shire Council I wish to provide the committee with the following submissions for your inquiry into Inter-regional Public Transport.

In 2010 the previous Government undertook a public consultation process into Country Link services throughout NSW of which Young was one of the areas selected. It was understood by our community that the Government of the day made a commitment to improve services to country NSW and that the current Government would continue to work with the Actions and Recommendations contained in the Report.

Young Shire Council together with Boorowa Council has lobbied for public transport services for it's communities.

In regards to Countrylink services we request that the recommendations from the Countrylink Up Report 2012 be acted upon:

Recommendation 37: That Countrylink investigate the deviation of the existing Countrylink coach service that operates from Queanbeyan to Cootamundra to go via Boorowa and Murringo at least two days per week. This would provide the community of Boorowa and Murringo with:

- A twice weekly return service to Young allowing for 4 hours in Young
- Connections to the XPT at Cootamundra to Melbourne and to Sydney
- Connections at Cootamundra with other coach services through to Griffith, Mildura, Bathurst, Dubbo, Condobolin, Canberra and Tumbarumba

Recommendation 38: That Countrylink investigate a two day per week service that links Temora-Young-Boorowa-Yass and Canberra. This would provide these communities with:

- A twice weekly return service to Canberra allowing 5 hours in Canberra.
- Connection with the Explorer at Canberra through to Sydney
- Connections with coach services in Canberra through to Cooma, Bega, Eden and Merimbula.

Unfortunately, despite taking an active part in the consultation, these recommendations do not provide the necessary service that is needed today and rely on another review to take place. Young is a growing regional centre and a daily link will allow people from towns like Boorowa to access a range of services both within Young and with other major centres across the state.

These services are also considered essential links for people from our region to connect to many health services available at hospitals in Canberra as well as to connect to road, rail and air transport services available from Canberra to other centres such as Sydney, Melbourne and the South Coast.

Currently residents wishing to access appointments in Canberra or Sydney have very few options, if they do not have private transport they need to try to access Community Transport or get to Harden or take a Countrylink Bus to Cootamundra for connections to Canberra or Sydney. This requires many of our elderly and disadvantaged residents to book overnight accommodation to be able to attend and return home in a satisfactory condition.

We request that when reviewing timetables and coach routes of Country Link, consideration be given to maximising connectivity to larger centres where ever possible that includes transport connections to health services, education and employment.

Council would also request that a five day a week service to connect Young and Boorowa to Goulburn as we wish to highlight the equity issue which arises with the costs involved in accessing services. For example a person accessing the Countrylink service at Goulburn to travel to Sydney pays a \$7.60 full adult fare compared to the same person accessing the service at Queanbeyan to travel to Sydney who pays \$79.10.

We request that when reviewing the lack of transport services to the Shire of Young you take the following key points into consideration.

- Passengers accessing the current services to Sydney are experiencing severe hardship with the unacceptable long waiting times at Cootamundra Station.
- For people trying to access the current Countrylink services there is a huge time and cost factor involved as they need to pay accommodation as well as travel costs to attend a simple appointment in Canberra or Sydney.
- There is a great need for a same day return service to both Canberra and Wagga for health appointments. Any service connecting Young to Canberra or Wagga should take into consideration travelling via the major hospitals and health facilities.
- As Young has no air services Wagga and Canberra are the nearest air services available. Access to these services has been identified as important for our community.
- Major educational facilities are situated in both Canberra and Wagga and there is currently no access for students living in Young if they have no private means of transport.

- Many residents need to attend Job Interviews at Canberra or Wagga and current services require overnight stays; which can prohibit some unemployed people from attending interviews.
- Access to the Family Law Court in Canberra is a need for many transport disadvantaged families.
- Young is the Cherry Capital of Australia and also has a huge range of stone fruit and grapes grown, but currently Itinerant workers have a problem getting to and from Young to access the work on offer.
- Young is a hub for services for surrounding towns but apart from private cars, school buses and Community Transport there is nothing available to bring people into the town to access these services.
- There is currently a huge disparity in the costs of transport in rural NSW in comparison with the city due to the concessions available in city areas.
- While people living in cities have the luxury of jumping on a bus or train at any time and travelling down to the shops or across the State, we find that for those living in our community who do not have their own vehicle it is very difficult and often impossible to access basic services yet alone travel to regional centres.

In response to the Committees terms of Reference, Council provides the following comments:

- a) How Countrylink services can be improved?
-by providing bus services to Young as recommended in the Country link up Report 2010 (recommendations 37 and 38)
- b) How network linkage between Countrylink train and coach services can be improved?
-by providing bus services to Young as recommended in the Country link Report 2010 (recommendations 37 and 38)
- c) The potential for Country link services to carry light freight.
-Countrylink coach services should not carry light freight at the expense of the passenger services. However we recognise the economics of providing a service and the cost to the passenger.
- d) How Countrylink can be better utilised to increase tourism in NSW
-as a regional centre there is no connection with major centres that can attract additional tourists through public transport. The only way a tourist can reach Young via Boorowa is by using their private motor vehicle.
- e) How the amount of Inter-regional travel taken by public transport can be increased?
-once again see recommendations 37 and 38 from the Country Link Up Report of 2010
- f) The extent to which regional public transport networks are intergraded and how they can be better integrated?
-as a regional centre Council is investigating the provision of a local bus service that would support the recommendation 37 and 38 from the Country Link Up Report 2010.
- g) The role local Councils can play in improving Inter-regional public transportation networks?
-As local Councils represents the community, the needs and representation are reflecting its community and therefore can advocate on its behalf to improve Government Services for its community
- h) The type of buses and trains that will be required for the provision of regional passenger services in the future?
-our community would love any bus services and would not consider the type of bus as an important issue at this point of time.

Another issue that Young can provide in this opportunity is that a bus service to Young would contribute to our economic development during the picking seasons which at this point in time has a significant restriction on our Itinerant workers every year.

In summary we believe that the transport challenge for this region is to connect towns like Young and Boorowa with a regular, reliable and affordable service which can connect communities with each other and provide access to regional centres. Council urges the State Government to not delay in providing an outcome to recommendations 37 and 38 of the Country Link up Report 2010 and immediately put in place a trial public transport route for the communities of Young and Boorowa whilst in considers how public transport for the rest of the State can be enhanced.

Once again thank you for giving us the opportunity to put forward on behalf of our Community this submission which I hope can make a difference to a much needed bus service for Young and our Region.

Yours Faithfully,

Stuart Freudenstein
MAYOR