

# Improving regional bus services

## Example Gender Impact Assessment

December 2024



# 1

## Steps 1 - 3 in the Gender Impact Assessment Process



This case study is based on a hypothetical proposal.  
It is intended for guidance purposes only.

## Summary of proposal

The proposal is for additional bus service improvements to the NSW South Coast. The improvements include more frequent services on weekdays and weekends, longer service operation hours, extended services to high growth areas and key destinations, improved travel times and construction of new bus shelters.

## Question 1: How does the issue you are seeking to address affect women, men or gender diverse people differently?

Rural and regional bus services in NSW carry around 47 million passengers a year.<sup>1</sup> This includes route services in towns and school services. In rural cities and towns, buses are often the only mode of public transport available to communities.<sup>2</sup> In a recent review into bus services in NSW, passengers highlighted the critical importance of meeting safety, timeliness and comfort standards for bus users.<sup>3</sup>

There are a number of ways bus service improvements to the NSW South Coast may have different impacts for women, men and gender diverse people:

### a) Gender composition of bus users in the South Coast region

The NSW South Coast stretches from Shoalhaven's Bay along the coast to North Durras.<sup>4</sup> According to Transport for NSW, over 1.5 million people use South Coast bus services each year.

There is currently no data available on the gender composition of bus users on the South Coast or NSW more broadly. In terms of overall population, according to the 2021 census, 50.9 per cent of the population on the South Coast are female, 49.1 per cent are male, and no data is available on the number of gender diverse people in the region.<sup>5</sup>

### b) People of different genders have different transport needs

Women are more likely to trip-chain when using public transport, which means they have more than one stop or use multiple modes of transport during one journey.<sup>6</sup> This is often because of caring

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2023, *Second Report*, October 2023.

<sup>2</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2023, *First Report*, July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2023, *Second Report*, October 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Federal District, South Coast NSW Map [2021-south-coast-district-high-res-map.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/2021-south-coast-district-high-res-map.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> ABS. 2021, *2021 Census: South Coast*.

<sup>6</sup> City of Sydney & C40 Cities 2020, *On The Go: How Women Travel Around Our City: A Case Study on Active Transport Across Sydney Through a Gender Lens*.

responsibilities. The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) states that, globally, women who have young children are 80 per cent more likely to trip chain than men.<sup>7</sup>

As outlined in the Bus Industry Taskforce Report, current services focus on connecting larger regional hubs, services to areas not in the centre of town are limited. A key concern for regional communities is that routes are infrequent and circuitous to cover as much of an area as possible on one route, with limited services after hours (including after 5.30pm on weekdays and on weekends).<sup>8</sup>

### **c) Women and gender diverse people will often have different perceptions of safety while using public transport**

Evidence shows that compared to men, women and gender diverse people will often have different perceptions and experiences of safety on public transport and while waiting at transport stops.<sup>9</sup> According to the NSW Safer Cities Survey, 74 per cent of women from regional areas felt unsafe at bus stops at night compared to 37 per cent of men in regional areas, and 24 per cent of women from regional areas felt unsafe at bus stops during the day, compared to 12 per cent of men.<sup>10</sup> In regional areas, with more limited frequency and coverage of services, wait times are likely to be extended.<sup>11</sup> There is also a significant lack of services in off-peak times.<sup>12</sup>

Safety impacts the way women and gender diverse people travel. For example, 78 per cent of women change their route and 76 per cent of women use multiple forms of transport to enhance safety.<sup>13</sup> Some groups feel even less safe in public spaces compared to all women and men surveyed, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, LGBTQIA+ women, women and men with disability, women under 25, and women over 75.<sup>14</sup> The NSW Safer Cities Survey also found that 17 per cent of non-binary people surveyed feel unsafe in public spaces *during the day*, compared to 7 per cent of women.<sup>15</sup>

A recent Australian study highlighted the importance of education for transport staff to address awareness and attitudes towards sexual assault and harassment on public transport experienced by women and gender diverse people.<sup>16</sup>

### **d) Design of bus stops**

There is a lack of bus related infrastructure including bus shelters and stops in regional areas.<sup>17</sup> Bus shelters that provide adequate cover, lighting and seating are important factors for perceptions of

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<sup>7</sup> ICLEI 2021, [Rethinking public transportation for women's safety and security](#), blog.

<sup>8</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2024, [The Forgotten Mode: a call to action for buses](#).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Women's Health East 2020, [Creating safe and inclusive public spaces for women](#), WHE, Melbourne, p.8, [GET IT: Gender Equality Toolkit in Transport](#) and Plan International, 2018, [Unsafe in the City: The everyday experiences of girls and young women](#)

<sup>10</sup> Transport for NSW 2023, [Safe Cities Survey Report](#).

<sup>11</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2024, [The Forgotten Mode: a call to action for buses](#).

<sup>12</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2024, [The Forgotten Mode: a call to action for buses](#).

<sup>13</sup> She's A Crowd and Transport for NSW, Concept Validation Report: Safety After Dark, 2020 cited in Transport for NSW. [Future Transport Strategy](#).

<sup>14</sup> Transport for NSW 2023, [Safe Cities Survey Report](#).

<sup>15</sup> Transport for NSW 2023, [Safe Cities Survey Report](#).

<sup>16</sup> Forsdike K, Ison J, Hooker L, Henry N, Taft A, 2024, ["God, whatever you do, don't tell people it's unsafe": Public transport service providers' perspectives on women's safety from sexual violence on public transport](#), *Transport Policy*, Volume 150, pp. 14-23.

<sup>17</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2024, [The Forgotten Mode: a call to action for buses](#).

safety for women.<sup>18</sup> Whether a space is clean and maintained also contributes to feeling of safety and inclusion.<sup>19</sup> Accessibility to bus stops is important, including for example, wider paths for parents pushing prams and wheelchair users.<sup>20</sup> Connecting public transport services and stops with active transport, such as walking or cycle tracks, has also been linked to women's uptake of active transport.<sup>21</sup>

The design of areas surrounding bus stops is also important. Women report feeling unsafe in areas near public transport such as pedestrian subways and bridges, stations, and bike paths.<sup>22</sup> Carrying out participatory safety walks is a useful tool to enable women and gender diverse people to identify potential safety risks in an area.<sup>23</sup> This should also consider last-mile connectivity, that is, the distance from bus stop locations to the final destination of passengers.<sup>24</sup>

## e) How intersectional factors shape experiences

The median age of the population on the South Coast is 49 years, ten years higher than the median age of the state of NSW.<sup>25</sup> The NSW Older Persons Transport Mobility Plan recognises that older people experience transport disadvantages due to poor access to transport infrastructure, geographical isolation, low income, low perception of safety and prohibitive costs of point-to-point alternative transport services. Yet, when buses are available, older people use them more frequently than other cohorts.<sup>26</sup>

### *Older Australians*

For older people who are transitioning from driving to public transport, regular access to affordable or free bus services with routes which access essential services is identified as an important factor for staying socially connected and maintaining independence.<sup>27</sup> No gender disaggregated data is available to understand whether there are any gendered differences in these needs.

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<sup>18</sup> City of Sydney & C40 Cities 2020, *On The Go: How Women Travel Around Our City A Case Study on Active Transport Across Sydney Through a Gender Lens*.

<sup>19</sup> Transport for NSW 2023, *NSW Guide to gender inclusive placemaking Ideas and opportunities for inclusive places*.

<sup>20</sup> Transport for NSW 2023, *NSW Guide to gender inclusive placemaking Ideas and opportunities for inclusive places*.

<sup>21</sup> City of Sydney & C40 Cities, 2020. *On The Go: How Women Travel Around Our City*

*A Case Study on Active Transport Across Sydney Through a Gender Lens*. Last mile connectivity refers to the final segment of a person's journey between the main transport system, such as a bus service, and the user's final destination.

<sup>22</sup> Kalms, N & Korsmeyer, H 2017. *Gender makes a world of difference for safety on public transport*, The Conversation, 18 July 2017.

<sup>23</sup> UN Habitat. *Women's Safety Audit: What works and where*; Women's Health East 2020, *Creating safe and inclusive public spaces for women*, WHE, Melbourne.

<sup>24</sup> City of Sydney & C40 Cities, 2020. *On The Go: How Women Travel Around Our City A Case Study on Active Transport Across Sydney Through a Gender Lens*.

<sup>25</sup> ABS 2021, *2021 Census: South Coast*. According to the 2021 census the average income on the South Coast is \$612 (personal) \$1,195 (household) and \$1,467 (family). These are considerable lower than the state averages of \$813 (personal), \$1,829 (household) and \$2,185 (family).

<sup>26</sup> Transport for NSW 2019, *Older Persons Transport and Mobility Plan - Staying active, independent and connected 2018–2022*.

<sup>27</sup> Rambaldini-Gooding D, Molloy L, Parrish A-M, Strahilevitz M, Clarke R, Perez P, 2023, *Free public transport and older people: An ethnographic study of an Australian bus service*. Australasian Journal on Ageing 42, pp. 409-416.

### *Low-income households*

The average personal and household income on the South Coast is considerably lower than the NSW state average.<sup>28</sup> Bus services in rural and regional areas are primarily used by people with lower incomes and greater transport disadvantage than the general population in rural and regional NSW.<sup>29</sup> This has implications for the cost of bus travel as well as access to concession fares. This data has not been disaggregated by gender.

### *First Nations communities*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprise 6.5 per cent of the South Coast population, higher than the NSW average of 3.4 per cent.<sup>30</sup> There is no gender-disaggregated data on the transport needs of First Nations people in NSW. However, a significant proportion of First Nations people face transport disadvantage.<sup>31</sup>

### *People with disabilities*

People with disabilities may have limited mobility and as a result have difficulty boarding and alighting from buses and accessing bus stops. In some parts of regional NSW, a passenger who wants to travel in an accessible service needs to request an accessible service in advance.<sup>32</sup>

## **f) Employment in the transport industry is highly gender segregated**

Currently, women constitute only 13 per cent of the bus driver workforce, significantly below the national average of 48 per cent across all occupations.<sup>33</sup> The NSW Bus Taskforce review identified increasing the proportion of women in the bus industry as key to creating a more inclusive and safe environment for passengers and staff.<sup>34</sup>

A 2022 research project identified key barriers for women entering and progressing their careers in transport related roles including gender stereotypes relating to capacity, prohibitive policies and practices and a ‘boys club’ workplace mentality.<sup>35</sup> Promoting transport careers in schools, inclusive and gender sensitive recruitment processes, gender equitable workplace policies and practices, mentoring schemes and engaging with women’s groups in the industry, have all been identified as strategies to support the participation of women in the transport industry.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> ABS. 2021, *2021 Census: South Coast*. According to the 2021 census the average income on the South Coast is \$612 (personal) \$1,195 (household) and \$1,467 (family). These are considerably lower than the state averages of \$813 (personal), \$1,829 (household) and \$2,185 (family).

<sup>29</sup> IPART, 2020, *Ensuring the affordability of rural and regional buses*, Information paper.

<sup>30</sup> ABS. 2021, *2021 Census: South Coast*

<sup>31</sup> IPART, 2020, *Ensuring the affordability of rural and regional buses*, Information paper.

<sup>32</sup> IPART, 2020, *Ensuring the affordability of rural and regional buses*, Information paper.

<sup>33</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2024, *The Forgotten Mode: a call to action for buses*.

<sup>34</sup> NSW Bus Industry Taskforce 2024, *The Forgotten Mode: a call to action for buses*.

<sup>35</sup> iMOVE, 2022, Final Report *The barriers to women entering and progressing in transport roles*.

<sup>36</sup> *Gender Equality Toolkit in Transport*, online toolkit: empowering industry.

## Question 2: What are the expected positive impacts of the proposal on women, men or gender diverse people?

The proposal will have an expected positive impact on:

### 1. Economic opportunity and advancement

- The proposal will increase transport frequency and improve the safety and reliability of bus services along the South Coast which will facilitate increased mobility and access to employment opportunities for people of all genders.
- The proposal will increase employment opportunities for women as bus drivers through a recruitment strategy which specifically targets a diverse range of people of all ages, backgrounds and genders.
- Consultations will be held with bus passenger forums, with diverse community representation, to determine whether access to concession fares should be expanded to support increased bus travel. Forums will also include potential future passengers who may shift to bus travel with the right incentives, route adjustments, or concessions.

### 2. Health and well being

- This project will align with NSW Transport Strategy to promote active transport and ensure that bus services in the coastal region connect with walking and cycling trails for greater health promotion.
- Bus routes will be planned to connect with local services and amenities to enable people of all genders to access health and wellbeing services and connect to the community.

### 3. Participation and empowerment

- Bus passenger forums will be held to encourage feedback from a diverse range of community members on the South Coast. These forums will consider the bus transport needs of older people, First Nations people, people with disabilities and those from a lower socio-economic background, and whether these needs differ by gender.
- New bus shelters will be designed with adequate cover, lighting, seating, and wide paths to enable access for wheelchairs and prams.
- During the design phase of this project, co-design workshops informed by the Safer Cities program will be held with local communities, including women's organisations, to respond to different perceptions of safety at current and planned bus stops across the south coast service.
- Increased recruitment of female bus drivers will create more diversity in the workforce, which is gender-segregated.

### Question 3: How will you mitigate any risks, barriers or limitations of the proposal on women, men or gender diverse people?

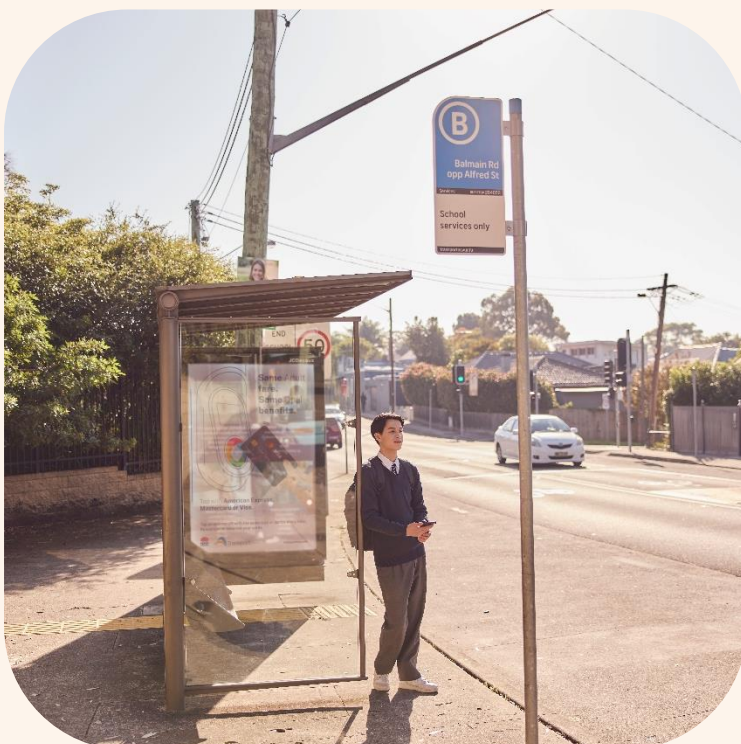
Risks / barriers / limitations	Mitigating strategies
<p>Additional bus services will not be utilised by the South Coast communities.</p>	<p>This project will engage closely with councils and community members, ensuring representation from diverse groups, to gain a deep understanding of the transport needs in the region.</p> <p>Alongside the bus improvement roll-out, a communication campaign will be launched to promote bus usage. This will show people of different genders, cultural backgrounds, ages and abilities.<sup>37</sup></p>
<p>Perceptions of safety may limit the use of bus services by women and gender diverse people.</p>	<p>The co-design process with people from diverse backgrounds in local communities will identify strategies to create feelings of safety and confidence when waiting at bus stops and travelling on buses.</p> <p>The communications campaign will also emphasise safety improvements.</p>
<p>Gender inclusive design of bus stops and buses will not in itself prevent sexual harassment and discrimination against women in public places and on transport.</p>	<p>The project will consult with other NSW Government agencies regarding initiatives to prevent sexual harassment on transport and in public spaces, including the Safer Cities Program and will explore a potential regional adaptation of this program.</p>

<sup>37</sup>See, for example, TramLab, 2020, *Toolkit 1: Gender-Sensitive Communication Campaigns – Improving the Safety of Women and Girls on Public Transport*.



# 2

## Steps 4 - 6 in the Gender Impact Assessment Process



## Question 4: Does the proposal support any gender equality indicators?

The proposal:

- Increases safety in workplaces and / or public spaces.

## Question 5: What are the knowledge gaps about the gendered impacts of this issue?

There is a shortage of gender-disaggregated data to understand whether senior Australians, First Nations people, people with disabilities and people of lower incomes have different transport needs and experiences on the basis of gender. This proposal will include a data improvement plan which outlines a phased approach to collecting bus usage data in the South Coast region and gender-disaggregated data on transport usage and needs of bus passengers. Information on passenger use and feedback on bus service delivery will also be incorporated into a monitoring and evaluation plan.

Greater information on the presence - and transport related needs - of gender diverse communities in the South Coast region would be valuable. The project will engage with relevant representative groups in the community and in NSW Government to delve deeper into this issue.

## Question 6: How will you collect data to monitor and/or evaluate the gendered impacts of the proposal?

The monitoring and evaluation of the proposal will:

- Collect gender disaggregated data of people who are engaged in stages of design and feedback
- Source case studies from participants of different genders – particularly new users of services and women or gender diverse people who obtain employment through the provision of increased bus services.
- Ensure diverse gender representation in consultations and analysis.

## Summary of the gender impact assessment

The proposal is for additional bus service improvements to the NSW South Coast. It seeks to have a positive impact on gender inequality by considering the different needs of people of different genders using South Coast bus services.

This proposal will consider how bus service improvements may have different impacts for women, men and gender diverse people by:

- improving the safety and reliability of bus services along the South Coast which will facilitate increased mobility and access to employment opportunities for people of all genders
- designing bus routes to connect local services and amenities to enable people of all genders to access health and wellbeing services and connect to the community
- increasing employment opportunities for women as bus drivers through a recruitment strategy which specifically targets gender stereotypes relating to the transport industry
- consulting with bus passenger forums, with diverse community representation, to consider the bus transport needs of older people, First Nations people, people with disabilities and those from a lower socio-economic background, and whether these needs differ by gender
- designing new bus shelters with adequate cover, lighting, seating, and wide paths to enable access for wheelchairs and prams
- ensuring that bus services in the South Coast region connect with walking and cycling trails to promote active transport for people of all genders
- Facilitating co-design workshops with local communities, including women's organisations, to respond to different perceptions of safety at current and planned bus stops across the South Coast service
- Launching a communication campaign to promote bus usage among different genders, cultural backgrounds, ages and abilities.

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