



To: Place Directorate
From: Adrian Davis
Date: 27/04/2015
Subject: Essential Evidence on a page: No. 134 Priorities for an age-friendly bus system

Top line: Initial steps to an age-friendly bus system include ensuring that all buses have accessible low-floor entrances and exits, ensuring that bus drivers are friendly and helpful, and providing frequent bus services that operate during mornings, evenings, & weekends.

Transport is an important precursor to accessing the community. Older people (60+) commonly experience transport disadvantage, including substantial problems with bus usability, which limits their participation in society and results in poorer health outcomes. In many areas buses are an integral part of meeting the transport needs of older people, especially for those who do not drive or have access to rides from family or friends. Age-friendliness is an approach that has developed in response to the need for community services that are useable for older people. The assumptions of age friendliness are, first, that older people have unique needs, characteristics, and preferences that are different from those of younger people, and second, by creating environments that cater for these needs we can improve older peoples' participation and functioning. The goal of age-friendliness is to identify and subsequently adapt important environmental factors to minimise barriers and maximise facilitators.

In a study among elders addressing barriers to the use of public transport,¹ these fell within a number of domains including service design and provision, the built environment, vehicle accessibility, information, other people, and factors relating to the older person. Barriers in *service design* included inappropriate timetabling and scheduling, long distances to the bus stop, inappropriate routes, poor connections, expensive and difficult to understand ticketing, or having no service in the area. Barriers in *service provision* were lack of punctuality, poor reliability, unexpected or unadvertised changes in the bus service, and difficulty handling payment. In normal group discussions the top 10 barriers and facilitators to bus use reported by older people were as listed below.²

Rank	Barriers	Votes	Facilitators	Votes
1	Limited scheduling of buses	207	Bus driver friendly and helpful	185
2	Long distance to the bus stop	141	Frequent and appropriate scheduling of buses	136
3	Poorly accessible entry and exit	114	Easy to get to bus stop	125
4	Inappropriate bus route	110	Accessible entry and exit	96
5	Poor connections	104	Good connections	77
6	Bus driver unfriendly & unhelpful	74	Appropriate bus route	61
7	Inadequate or no bus shelter	62	Affordable and easy to use ticketing	58
8	Inconvenience	57	Appropriate bus size	47
9	Lack of prior knowledge	51	Prior knowledge	40
10	No service in the area	48	Appropriate bus shelter available; Information easy to understand	37

The barriers and facilitators to bus use for older people are varied, including aspects of the vehicle (e.g., entry and exit, handles and railings, signage, width of the aisle), scheduling, routes, connections, pedestrian and bus stop infrastructure, bus driver helpfulness and friendliness, information environments, and prior knowledge. Creating an age-friendly bus system involves overcoming these barriers and maximising facilitators, beginning with those that have the greatest impact on bus usability.

¹ Broome, K., Worrall, L., McKenna, K., Boldy, D. 2010 Priorities for an age-friendly bus system, *Canadian Journal of Ageing*, 29(3): 435-444.

² Discussion groups based on ethnography provided slightly different prioritisation of barriers.