



Fiji Bus Industry Review

Orion Consulting Associates undertook a review of the Fiji Bus Industry from December 2008 to January 2009. The transport consultants were Paul Starkey (Team Leader) and Dr Sion Haworth. They worked closely with the Fiji Land Transport Authority, the Ministry of Works and Transport, members of the Fiji Bus Operators Association and other relevant authorities and organisations.

Bus transport is very important in Fiji. Sixty-six private companies provide urban and rural bus services in Fiji. Most of the country's population live within walking distance of a bus stop. The buses in Fiji are generally safe, covered by insurance and keep to regulated speeds and loading levels. Bus transport is popular, but the industry has an old-fashioned image and is criticised when people observe old and smoky vehicles. The bus operators claim that the prevailing poor road conditions increase their costs and restrict their ability to renew their fleets. The bus operators benefit from a subsidy on fuel and provide some low-fare services for school children and old people. During the period of high fuel prices in 2007, they also received a direct subsidy in return for keeping ticket prices stable.

The issues of bus fares and subsidies are controversial, with some people thinking the bus companies are charging too much. There are also major competition issues. An increasing number of minibuses compete with buses on the main roads, while passenger-carrying trucks compete on rural roads. The bus operators claim some of this competition is unfair, with very different regulatory practices for the different forms of transport. It is feared that bus services that are regulated for timetables and fares cannot survive if there is unregulated free-market competition. Many of these issues were discussed in workshops facilitated by the OCA team.

OCA provided advice relating to bus safety, routes, ticketing systems, operating costs, concessionary fares, fleet renewal, subsidies and regulation. They also noted the importance of road condition and maintenance and integrated transport planning. The Consultants stressed the need to achieve an appropriate balance of competing and complementary public transport services that are safe and affordable.

