

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Shoalhaven City Council
Name: Mr Rob Donaldson
Position: Assistant General Manager
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Submission to

**INTER REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT
INQUIRY**

Prepared by:

Shoalhaven City Council

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Introduction

This submission has been prepared in response to the invitation by the NSW Government for submissions to the Inter Regional Public Transport Inquiry.

Council strongly supports improved integration of public transport services and infrastructure with strategic land use planning and employment strategies as a key component of more effective state, regional and local planning and delivery of transport outcomes.

Key Priorities

Our submission on the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan Discussion Paper identifies that investment in expanding the rail network should be the highest priority. We need further investment in a metropolitan underground network, increased capacity in existing rail links through increase frequency of services and planned capacity for both commuters and freight.

In particular we advocate expansion of services to regional areas and network integration outcomes.

Optimising networks

We submit that:

- For commuters within Sydney and in the outer fringe, rail systems should be preferred in whole or in part.
- Bus routes should be used to interconnect all rail lines.
- An “M7-style” rail loop around Sydney would meet passenger and freight services needs.
- Flexible working hours and work-from-home policies will lessen the congestion of commuter peak hours, with initiatives such as investing in the NBN increasing work from home capacity.
- Region-based commuters should be encouraged towards walking/cycling through both infrastructure and policy positions that improve end user facilities such as bike racks, lockers and showers.
- Provision of toilet facilities on journeys of 3 hours or more on the Country network, or short stops of 5-10 minutes at nominated stations, would improve the regional travel experience.

Services

Current areas for improvement include:

- Integration of timetables between modes.
- Frequency of services.
- Commuter parking and park/ride and car parks for car pooling.
- Promotion of car pooling.
- Integration with path networks and pedestrian / cyclist safety for access between modes.

There is also a need for more integrated public and private local bus systems for local commuting.

Country Link can be improved with:

- Faster travel speeds (high/er speed rail).
- Service improvements for the 'missing link' in the Country Link and rail-coach network, ie the link from Wollongong to Nowra and connecting to Queanbeyan and Canberra.
- Complete electrification of the South Coast rail line to Bomaderry and improve capacity for freight movement via rail.
- Better deals for travellers where multiple fares may be required.
- Fares integrated with car hire, accommodation or car parking, to provide enticing travel package deals.
- Improved interstate bus pickup/setdown areas with good local intermodal connections.

Other improvements to consider include:

- Duplication of rail lines to increase capacity and frequency of services.
- In larger regional centres, especially where rail transport is provided, local bus commuter systems on a "circulatory timetable" could provide connectivity to important service nodes.
- Increased funding for community transport to deliver more flexible options for regional services that are critical to full participation of sections of regional communities in the community training and employment.
- Fare parity and contract flexibility to better service those regional areas with a dispersed 'towns, villages and hamlets' settlement pattern.
- Improve and expand availability of school bus pass flexibility to allow young people to travel for extended times and with a range of bus operators.
- Review the concept of 'fare equity' for taxi drivers, particularly in regional areas, to reduce the need for large taxi ranks and associated anti social behaviour and violence after hours.

Serious Strategic Planning

Regional public transport also requires medium to long-term commitment to forward planning of infrastructure around service needs such as:

- Review and confirm long-term strategic options for a high-speed rail connection from Nowra to Canberra, linked to the national high speed rail network, including consideration of a route corridor to be identified in planning instruments.
- Driven by planning for a second Sydney airport, plan for strong freight and public transport links between Nowra, South Nowra and the Hume Highway corridor.
- Resolve long-term planning provisions for extension of the South Coast rail line beyond the Shoalhaven River to (at least) a major Nowra CBD interchange.
- Consider the western Nowra by-pass corridor for a future rail link to service urban growth areas of Nowra/Bomaderry, West Nowra, University of Wollongong's Nowra campus and the employment hub at South Nowra.