

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Wollongong City Council
Name: Councillor Gordon Bradbery
Position: Lord Mayor
Date Received: 18/05/2012

Mr Andrew Gee MP
Committee Chair
NSW Parliament Legislative Assembly
State and Regional Development Committee
stateregional@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Gee

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Thank you for your letter of 8 March 2012 inviting Wollongong City Council to make a submission to the subject inquiry.

Wollongong is the acknowledged “Regional Capital” of the Illawarra with a Local Government Area (LGA) 2011 population of 204,025 residents. The urban area known as the Wollongong Statistical District comprising the LGAs of Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama currently has a residential population of some 300,000 persons.

The significance of inter-regional travel is illustrated by 2006 census data that shows 17.3% of Wollongong’s workforce commutes to Sydney. The soon to be released 2011 census data is expected to reveal an increasing percentage in commuting to Sydney on top of a larger number in the workforce. Data showing little increase in rail patronage to Sydney corresponds with a steady increase in F6 Freeway (at Waterfall) traffic volumes that reflects commuters’ preference for car based inter-regional trips rather than using public transport. This travel mode choice is the product of a degree of general community dissatisfaction with the current rail service, quality of station infrastructure and rolling stock together with a perception of, on occasions, poor service reliability.

Wollongong’s regional role is strengthened by the number of specialist medical services and facilities that attract residents from adjacent southern regions. These residents, often being financially disadvantaged, physically disabled and elderly, are also often “transport poor” and seek better inter-regional public transport services. Likewise, Wollongong’s tertiary education institutions also attract students and academics from adjoining regions to the south as well as from Sydney’s southern suburbs with many having to rely on public transport.

1. **CountryLink Coach Services**

Council’s response to terms of reference issues (a) to (d) specifically relates to this region’s CountryLink coach services that in recent years have attempted to “fill the gap” left by the withdrawal of some inter-regional rail services. Council believes

the attractiveness of the existing CountryLink coach services accessing Wollongong could be enhanced through both additional marketing and increased service frequency. Furthermore, to address issue (e), increases in these services' patronage could be achieved by the provision of improved end of trip interchange and intermediate stop facilities.

For example, Wollongong has a privately operated coach terminal (corner of Keira Street and Campbell Street, North Wollongong) that is situated some 1.5 kilometres from Wollongong rail station. The relocation of services operating from this private facility to a consolidated facility at Wollongong rail station should be investigated for implementation within a short term timeframe. Existing inter-regional coach services (ie, Murrays scheduled services to and from Canberra) as well as the CountryLink coach services would operate from this consolidated central location having tourism booking services and passenger lounge facilities provided. Such a facility at this centralised location would enable much improved access to a range of transport options including rail, taxi and local bus services as well as improved access to local accommodation and business establishments.

2 Public Transport Links with Sydney

The issues relating to inter-regional public transport between Wollongong and Sydney have recently been the subject of a comprehensive submission to Transport for NSW by this Council as part of the development of the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan. (See attachment 1). Furthermore, Council has also recently made a submission to the Inquiry into the Utilisation of Rail Corridors (see attachment 2) which also addresses in some detail local initiatives to increase inter-regional public transport patronage. Both these recent submissions stress the need for significant improvement to rail commute times between Wollongong and Sydney. Such action, it is pointed out, is essential for the social wellbeing and economic growth of Wollongong and the Illawarra Region. Wollongong's proximity to Sydney and its contribution to the New South Wales economy are given as strong reasons to improve sustainable transport links with Sydney. Furthermore, the viability of direct or improved public transport links with Western Sydney (for example, Liverpool and Parramatta CBD) should be investigated.

3. Council Roles

Wollongong City Council sees a need for its greater involvement in the planning of transport links especially between the Illawarra Region and Sydney. In this regard, the need to include the Illawarra Region into the land use and transport planning of a Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region has recently been endorsed by Council in its submission to Transport for NSW. Specifically, that submission called for a resolution of the commuter and freight rail conflicts between Sydney and Wollongong. This issue is widely acknowledged as adversely impacting both freight operations and commuter services on the South Coast rail line.

Council has more direct involvement in the planning and provision of end of trip transport infrastructure and integrated marketing through Tourism Wollongong. It is in these areas that Council would welcome greater involvement with the relevant transport agencies in order to achieve enhanced public transport customer experience and resultant patronage increases.

4 Type of Buses and Trains

The type of buses and trains used for inter-regional travel to and from Wollongong and the Illawarra Region should reflect the trip length/duration and provide a higher level of passenger comfort and on-board facilities than those on shorter length metropolitan services.

Finally, I trust Council's response will assist your Committee's inquiry and I thank you for this opportunity to make a submission on these matters. Should you wish to discuss these matters, please call me directly or for technical enquiries, please contact

Yours sincerely

Lord Mayor
Councillor Gordon Bradbery OAM
Wollongong City Council
Encls.



Wollongong City Council

Submission to Transport for NSW

NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan (Discussion Paper)



David Farmer
General Manager
Wollongong City Council
27 April 2012

1. Introduction

Wollongong City Council (Council) appreciates this opportunity to provide input to the preparation of the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan (the Master Plan). This submission provides comment on a Master Plan Discussion Paper (the Paper) released in February 2012. A Draft Master Plan is to be released mid-year for further public feedback.

This submission is endorsed by Council resolution (Ordinary Meeting of Council on 23 April 2012; Item 6, Minute No. 109).

The submission is set out in four parts as follows:

- 1. Introduction,**
- 2. Submission Context,**
- 3. Wollongong City Council Submission, and**
- 4. Submission Conclusions.**

In addition, Attachment 1 includes a local area map and Attachment 2 provides a consolidated copy of the submission's recommendations.

The Discussion Paper presents 23 strategic questions to assist in the preparation of submissions, however Council's submission addresses only what it sees to be the major regional transport issues for inclusion in the Master Plan. These will provide direction and context for the subsequent preparation of a regional plan that will address the more detailed local issues.

Whilst the Paper appears to focus largely on the many Sydney issues of national and state significance, Council is concerned that a number of significant local and regional issues will be over-shadowed by those Sydney issues. Notwithstanding this view, the Paper's vision, objectives and opportunities are supported and the NSW Government is commended for adopting an inclusive consultation process for the Master Plan's preparation.

Finally, it is Council's view that, while Wollongong is acknowledged as the "Regional Capital" of the Illawarra, that due to its proximity and economic links with Australia's global city Sydney, an integrated Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region (GSMR) transport planning approach be adopted in the Master Plan. It would then be in this planning framework that informed decisions on the necessary transport infrastructure linking the sub-regions within the GSMR and other surrounding regions with Wollongong can be made.

2. Submission Context

2.1 Demographic Context

- Wollongong is the acknowledged "Regional Capital" of the Illawarra.
- Wollongong Local Government Area (LGA) population was 204,025 persons in 2011. (Preliminary based on 2011 Census)
- Wollongong Statistical District (WSD), comprising the LGAs of Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama represents an almost contiguous urban area with a 2010 population of 292,190 persons.
- The NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure's population projection for the WSD at 2036 is some 340,000 persons.
- The Wollongong workforce at the 2006 Census was 83,551 (including 7.5% unemployed) with some 13,400 residents (17.3%) commuting to Sydney to work (up from 15.9% in 1996).
- In 2006 there were some 77,300 jobs in the Wollongong LGA with "self containment" at 67.7% (down from 72.4% in 1996).
- Data showing little increase in rail patronage to Sydney and a steady increase in F6 Freeway (Waterfall) traffic volumes reflects commuter's preference for a car-based transport mode for most trips between Wollongong and Sydney.

2.2 Wollongong's Spatial, Economic and Transport Context

- Wollongong is a relatively linear city set between the Illawarra Escarpment and the sea, stretching for some 50kms from Helensburgh in the north to Windang and Dapto in the south. (See Attachment 1)
- Wollongong is 85kms by road and rail from Sydney with the urban areas separated by the Royal National Park. Canberra is situated some 240kms by road to the south west.
- Wollongong is serviced by a wide range of transport infrastructure and services including a deep sea port (Port Kembla), a regional airport at Albion Park, heavy rail links to Sydney and south to Bomaderry (Nowra) and Moss Vale (on the main southern line), inter-regional arterial road links and local privately operated bus services. Taxi services as well as community transport and volunteer driver services play an important role.
- An increasing level of car ownership is evident in that the total number of registered vehicles per 1,000 population in the WSD rose from 584 in 2006 to 618 in 2010. There are also currently some 1.45 cars per household.
- Local freight movement by rail competes for access paths with passenger services. In excess of 20 million tonnes per annum of freight are moved into and through the region by rail with the majority being bulk commodities (coal and grain) bound for Port Kembla.
- Arterial roads surrounding Wollongong experience high traffic volumes with up to a 20% heavy vehicle component primarily transporting coal, grain, car imports and other industry related freight.
- In 2009-10 the Illawarra Region's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was \$15.5 billion which represented 3.8% of the State's Gross State Product. While regional economic indicators have, to some extent, reflected a global downturn in recent years, there is some local optimism arising from progress on some major local developments. These include the \$330 million Stockland Shellharbour retail expansion and GPT's Wollongong CBD \$200 million Keira West expansion, both under construction. In

addition, the continued development of the University of Wollongong's Innovation Campus, coal mining developments together with Port Kembla port facility expansion and related projects, sets a basis for a positive economic future for the region and resultant need for improved transport infrastructure and services.

2.3 Previous Transport and Planning Strategies

- In 1993 the NSW Government released "*Sydney's Future: A Discussion Paper on Planning the Greater Metropolitan Region*" that integrated Newcastle and Wollongong into the planning of a greater metropolitan Sydney region. (GSMR) In 1995, the "*Cities for the 21st Century*" document was released and included Wollongong (and Newcastle) into Sydney's regional planning.
- Subsequently, various NSW Government transport and planning strategies have either included or excluded the Illawarra/Wollongong. For example, "*Shaping Our Cities*" (1998) included Wollongong while both "*City Of Cities*" (2005) and the "*Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036*" (2010) as well as its Part C on Transport exclude Wollongong.
- "*Action for Transport 2010*" (Sydney) excluded Wollongong while "*Action for Transport 2010*" (NSW) included only a brief section on the Illawarra and South Coast.
- The NSW State Plan "*NSW 2021*" includes a target (Goal 8) of 15% of commute trips during peak hours to and from Wollongong CBD by 2016 to be by public transport. The current proportion is still below 10%.
- The Illawarra Transport Taskforce (T-Team), consisting of Government Agencies, Local Government, transport providers and key transport related stakeholders, was set up by the Illawarra Sub-committee of the Metropolitan Strategy Committee in the mid 1990s to prepare a transport strategy for the Illawarra. "*Illawarra's Action for Transport*" was released on 22 March 1999 and subsequently updated with the new title "*Moving Together 2004*". This document has also recently been reviewed with the results forming a significant basis for this submission.

- In April 2010, in response to an invitation from the then NSW Transport & Infrastructure, Council submitted correspondence (letter dated 14 May 2010) that highlighted a number of issues for consideration in the preparation of an Illawarra Regional Transport Strategy. The issues raised are still considered to be relevant in the context of this current submission.

3. Wollongong City Council Submission

The following issues and recommendations are put forward (not necessarily in order of importance) for consideration for inclusion in the Draft NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan. (Attachment 2 consolidates recommendations)

3.1 Regional Connections

The planning and implementation of safe and efficient transport links between Wollongong and adjoining Regions is considered to be of utmost importance. Significant benefits would be gained by both the Illawarra and Sydney Regions arising from improved access to employment and services in Sydney as well as Sydney's improved access to the deep water port of Port Kembla, the Illawarra's heavy industry and rapidly expanding technology and research sector.

Good links with Sydney CBD, Redfern and Mascot by both road and rail are crucial, however increasingly; safe and efficient road and rail links are required with the western and south western sub-regions of Sydney for freight movement and access to jobs.

While heavy industry in the Illawarra will continue in the foreseeable future, an emerging high technology and research presence necessitates an increasing dependence on global connectivity (importantly, via Kingsford Smith Airport) as

well as with Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. Accordingly, there is strong local support for good road and high speed rail links to the above major centres.

The recent public debate on the most appropriate location of Sydney's second airport is very relevant. The significant transport implications (and economic benefits) for Wollongong, the Illawarra and indeed Sydney itself of such a major land use activity potentially being located at Wilton suggest that it would be remiss of the NSW State Government to release a draft NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan without first having this matter resolved.

RECOMMENDATION 1

A "*Multi-modal Inter-regional Transport Linkages*" strategy be prepared as a matter of urgency in order to integrate previous single mode studies and to reserve/preserve necessary transport corridors for future infrastructure prioritisation and funding.

3.2 Regional Travel Containment

A fundamental principle in sustainable transport planning is the integration of land use and transport services. The synergy between many land uses and hence potential economic prosperity and standards of living, is largely dependent on the level of accessibility of those land uses. Accessibility can be improved by either reducing the separation or improving the "supply" of transport services to meet an existing or planned travel demand.

Obviously, Wollongong cannot be brought closer to Sydney (or vice versa) however, through the relocation of major employers, both Government and private sector to Wollongong, (decentralisation) travel demand can be reduced. Such action would improve Wollongong's level of "self containment" (currently 67.7%) and have significant social, economic and environmental benefits. Furthermore, significant capital expenditure on transport infrastructure can be delayed or possibly even avoided. Notwithstanding, improved Wollongong self

containment of employment does not lessen the need for improved inter-regional linkages required to achieve previously mentioned economic goals.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Transport for NSW work with existing local groups including Council's Economic Development Advisory Board and RDA Illawarra to achieve significant growth in local employment as a means of reducing travel demand.

3.3 Freight Movement – Road and Rail

Wollongong's heavy industry, mining activity and sea port have resulted in a significant regional freight task. A high proportion of freight in the Illawarra Region is on-road according to data in the NSW Government commissioned (not publicly released) *"Illawarra & South Coast NSW Freight Study" (2005)*.

An increasing volume of road based freight interacts with other general traffic on local and arterial roads. Following a local history of heavy vehicle related fatal incidents; the interaction between light and heavy vehicles continues to give rise to a relatively high level of social tension. There is a prevailing body of local sentiment that the NSW Government should do more to encourage significantly more freight off the roads and on to the rail network. A Council resolution (Ordinary Meeting 30 January 2012, Minute No. 5) was adopted to this effect.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Transport for NSW, as part of its current work on the NSW Freight and Ports strategies, consult with Illawarra Councils and local communities on proposed measures to address the impacts of the Port Kembla port expansion as well as proposed measures to increase both the existing and future proportion of all freight within the Region on to rail.

3.4 Working with Local Government

The Discussion Paper in Section 3.2.2 (Page 25) outlines the role of Local Government in planning, managing and providing essential transport infrastructure and services. Local Government represents the “grass root” interests of their local communities and therefore play an important role in partnerships with State Transport Agencies, transport providers and other non-government organisations in the planning and management of transport services.

The Discussion Paper proposes a strategic question (#14 Page 75) as follows: *“How can different levels of government and the non-government sector work more effectively together to improve the transport outcomes for the regions?”* The Illawarra Region has, since 1997, had a transport taskforce consisting of State Government Agencies and Local Government known as the T-Team. Since then it has produced Regional Transport Plans that have been endorsed by the NSW Government. It has also made a recent submission including an updated draft Illawarra Regional Transport Plan (2010) to the NSW Government.

In response to Question 23 on funding, Councils provide regional and local roads, bridges, footpaths, cycleways and bus stops for their local communities at increasingly significant cost. The provision of safe and basic levels of such infrastructure to meet reasonable community expectations is rapidly exceeding most Councils financial capabilities. A socially responsible road pricing model including a Local Government transport infrastructure funding component is supported.

RECOMMENDATION 4

- i) Future transport plans be developed through an inclusive consultation model such as the existing Illawarra Transport Taskforce (T-Team).
- ii) The Master Plan support the development of an equitable road pricing model (initially applied to heavy vehicles) that encourages sustainable transport choice and assists Local Government fund new local transport infrastructure and maintenance of existing assets.

3.5 Support and Resource Active Transport

Part 3 of the Discussion Paper refers to a number of transport objectives. Specifically, section 3.1.3 (in only one short paragraph) refers to the enhancement of environmental sustainability. Given the wider community's increasing concern with the environment in its broadest sense, Council would expect the Master Plan to address this aspect of transport's impacts and potential benefits in greater length and in significant detail.

Therefore, in response to the Discussion Paper's strategic question No. 1, (adequacy of nominated transport objectives) Council requests that greater emphasis be given in the Master Plan to ways and means to support and resource active transport.

Active transport has well documented social, health, environmental and economic benefits for a wide cross section of the community. Council would therefore expect the State Government to develop comprehensive strategies and plans for active transport modes that include walking, cycling and public transport. The allocation of annual budgets to provide the necessary infrastructure and services that match the significant community benefits arising is also essential.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan place greater emphasis on both environmental sustainability and social benefit objectives. The support and resourcing (including increased ongoing annual budgets) for necessary infrastructure and services to increase the mode share of active transport is considered to be essential in order to achieve the State Government's goals.

3.6 Other Key Regional Transport Issues

The following major transport issues have featured prominently on the local Wollongong community “agenda” at regular intervals in recent times. In many instances, the projects referred to are supported by extensive studies. Therefore, these projects are included in this submission for completeness to ensure they remain on the State/Regional transport planning agenda. Each should be investigated or confirmed and implemented in the context of an overarching transport master plan or regional strategy. Again, the following projects are not necessarily in priority order.

- i) Maldon – Dombarton rail link;
- ii) South Coast rail line upgrade (Thirroul to Waterfall);
- iii) F6 Freeway extension through southern Sydney;
- iv) Picton Road safety and capacity upgrades;
- v) Appin Road safety and capacity upgrades;
- vi) Mount Ousley Road capacity upgrades;
- vii) Wollongong Northern suburbs Memorial Drive to Bulli Tops link;
- viii) Macquarie Pass upgrade/alternative road access to Southern Highlands;
- ix) Princes Highway (South Coast) safety and capacity upgrades; and
- x) Other significant local issues must be addressed such as:
 - Provision of transport infrastructure and services (including the F6 Albion Park Bypass and transport interchange at Dapto) to support the West Dapto land release (20,000 new homes) so as to achieve a significant mode shift to public transport, walking and cycling.
 - Provision of infrastructure to support the re-introduction of air services at Albion Park Regional Airport (Shellharbour LGA) would have far-reaching regional economic benefits. Alternatively, a decision must be made on the location of Sydney’s second airport.
 - Transport infrastructure to support tourism such as traffic improvements on tourist drives and possible tourist vessel berthing and passenger facilities at Port Kembla.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan address the above key regional projects (including that necessary for major land releases now commenced) to give assurance of their consideration in the forthcoming Regional Transport Plan.

4. Submission Conclusions

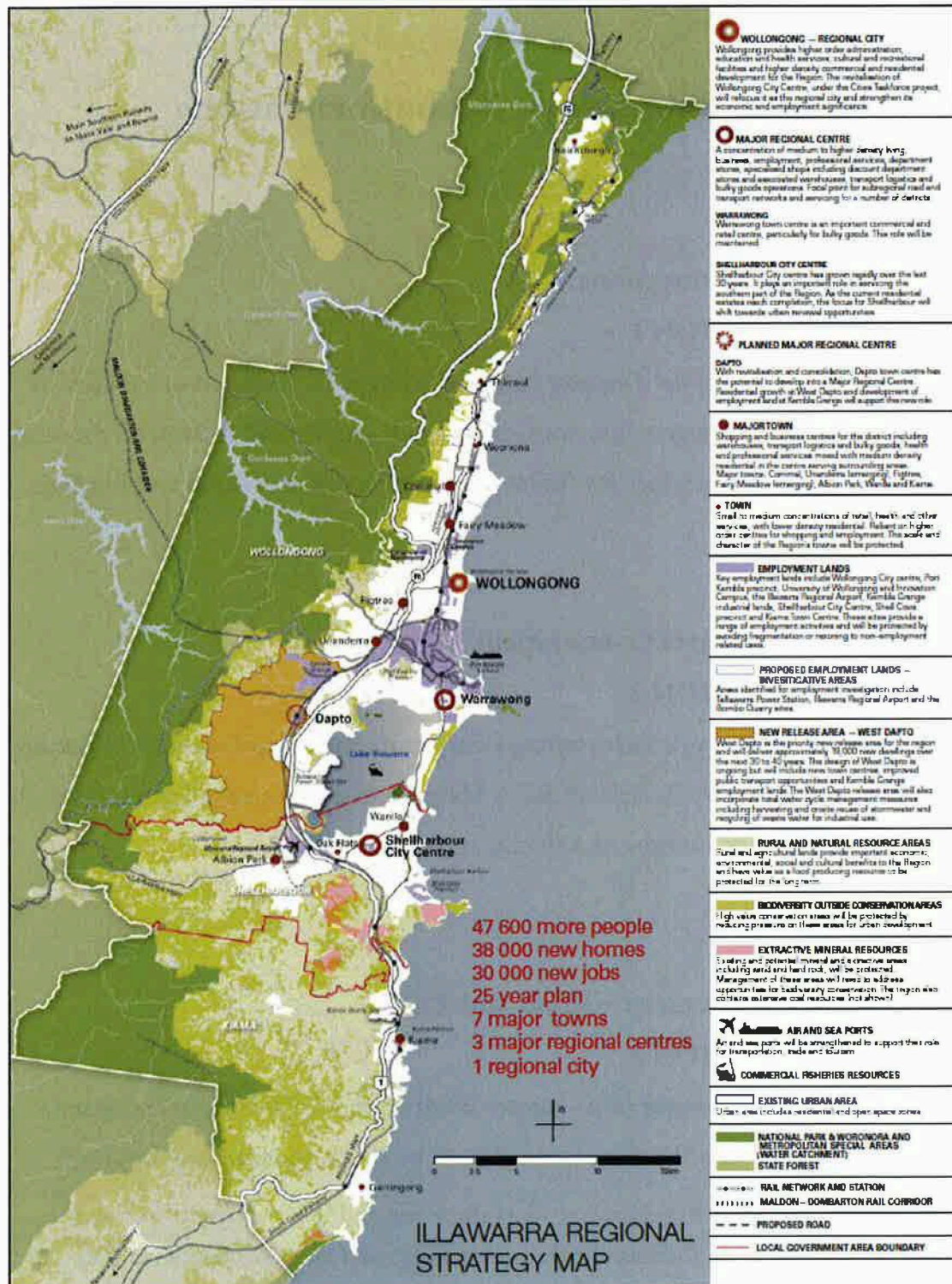
This submission highlights a number of key transport issues confronting Wollongong and the Illawarra Region that Council considers should be addressed in the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan.

Importantly, this submission does not represent a comprehensive dissertation on the numerous transport challenges already facing the City and increasingly so in coming years. Many of those issues and specific projects have previously been identified in a draft (unpublished) local transport strategy “Moving Together 2010” that was forwarded to the NSW Government by the Illawarra Transport Taskforce (T-Team) to be addressed in a forthcoming “Illawarra Transport Plan”.

Additionally, Council believes the impact of climate change and resultant sea level rises on coastal transport infrastructure must be considered in the Master Plan. Furthermore, Council requests a greater emphasis be placed on active transport.

Local Government’s acknowledged role in transport warrants the continued involvement of Council in regional transport planning matters. The financial burden of providing and maintaining local transport infrastructure could be, in part, addressed by the introduction of an equitable road pricing model.

Finally, it is Council’s view that the recognition of Wollongong as the Illawarra Region’s “Capital City”, a major contributor to the State’s economic performance as well as its social ties and proximity to Sydney warrants its ongoing inclusion in Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region’s urban and transport planning processes.



Map source: NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure (Jan. 2007)

Wollongong Local Government Area
shown within the Wollongong Statistical District
(Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama Local Government Areas)

Consolidated Submission Recommendations

3.1 Regional Connections

RECOMMENDATION 1

A “*Multi-modal Inter-regional Transport Linkages*” strategy be prepared as a matter of urgency in order to integrate previous single mode studies and to reserve/preserve necessary transport corridors for future infrastructure prioritisation and funding.

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