Submission
No 192

INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Organisation: Northern Rivers Regional Development Board

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Date Received: 30/08/2005

Subject:

Summary

GPSC4 GPSC4 - SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY ON PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

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GENERAL PURPOSE
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From: "Katrina Luckie" <kluckie@nrrdb.com.au>
To: <gpscno4@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 29/08/05 17:00:31
Subject: SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY ON PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

Dear Tanya,

Please find attached a submission from the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board into the Inquiry on Pacific Highway Upgrades. I have also attached two documents referred to in the submission that may be of use for further information or review by the Inquiry Committee.

Regards

Katrina

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Legislative Council
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the development board
Tel: 02 6622 4011

29 August 2005

The Committee Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No 4
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Attn: Tanya Bosch gpscno4@parliament.nsw.gov.au

To Whom it May Concern,

RE: SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY ON PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADES

This submission on the Inquiry into Pacific Highway Upgrades from the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board provides comment on the importance of the Pacific highway upgrade to be considered in a strategic and holistic approach to transport planning, and some matters specific to the highway upgrading.

A Strategic Approach to Transport Planning
The Development Board recognises the central importance of transport to the health of the Northern Rivers, and advocates for the development of a regional transport strategy that will ensure that the investment and consumption decisions of all transport stakeholders – the three tiers of government, transport operators, the business sector, households and visitors – complement and support the wider regional objective of delivering a balanced and environmentally sustainable pattern of development.

The Northern Rivers region is located on the far north coast of NSW and includes the local government areas of Tweed, Byron, Kyogle, Ballina, Lismore, Richmond Valley and the Clarence Valley. In 2001, the population of the region was 265,000. The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) estimates that the population in 2005 is in the order of 278,000 persons[1] and is predicted to grow to 336,000 by the year 2026.

Transport is a key element of the Northern Rivers regional economy with major implications for both current and future public sector and commercial investment decisions and land use planning. Transport decisions therefore affect social equity and amenity and the health and wellbeing of our communities – where and how we live, work, learn and recreate. Effective transport planning and management is fundamental to our collective impact on the environment's life support systems and has far-reaching implications for income distribution and welfare dependency.

Approximately half the region's population is currently concentrated on the coast in the centres of Tweed Heads, Murwillumbah, Ballina, Lismore, Yamba and Grafton. However, the region has a dispersed settlement pattern, with 57% of the region's population living in the 300 small villages or localities scattered throughout the region. Planning work on the Northern Rivers Regional Strategy[2] and the DIPNR Far North Coast Regional Strategy have recognised the village settlement pattern as a key element in past and future growth of the Northern Rivers region.

[1] SGS Economics and Planning; O'Neill Pollock & Associates. 2005. *Draft Regional Industry and Economic Plan*. Working Draft prepared for Northern Rivers Regional Development Board for limited release to assist targeted stakeholder consultation.
[2] See www.nrrs.org.au

Consequently, infrastructure provision and transport planning needs to be considered in terms of this settlement pattern and the unique opportunities and needs it poses.

The provision of sufficient strategic/economic enabling infrastructure to maintain appropriate conditions for continued employment and economic growth is critical for the region's communities. The Development Board is in the process of preparing a Regional Industry and Economic Plan (RIEP) for the Northern Rivers[1] and in this process has identified a need for investment in strategic infrastructure associated with transport and access. The Draft Plan (enclosed) identifies some of these specific needs, noting the importance of the Pacific Highway.

The Development Board encourages government to consider the following principles in all matters related to transport planning, including upgrade of the Pacific Highway:

- a holistic, integrated and long-term approach to transport is needed to address the economic, social and environmental needs and challenges of the region;
- environmental sustainability and the evolution of settlement patterns appropriate to the specific environmental, cultural and economic characteristics of the region should drive transport planning, investment and management decisions;
- transport planning and development should aim to maintain a stable and predictable investment environment for regional industries including agriculture, tourism and residential development;
- the importance to the region of efficient, cost effective and convenient transport links to South East Queensland must be central to transport planning and development;
- transport planning is an integral part of a comprehensive approach to major infrastructure development including telecommunications, energy and water distribution;
- transport development should balance the needs of stakeholders and avoid usage conflicts to ensure higher standards of safety and a more equitable sharing of transport costs and impacts;
- triple bottom line evaluation including full cost accounting should be applied to all transport infrastructure projects; and
- transport development should encourage behavioural change by all categories of users to achieve more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable outcomes.

A particular need is the integration of transport planning with regional economic and land use planning (ie through DIPNR's Far North Coast Regional Strategy) to minimise the negative impacts of transport development on land values and commercial investment planning in the broader regional economy. This requires the protection of all existing transport corridors (including both rail and road) and the investigation of more innovative use of these corridors to enhance flexibility and meet settlement needs. It also involves the use of up-to-date technology to improve traffic and freight management to avoid network congestion and usage conflicts, reduce bottlenecks and usage conflicts and improving the efficiency and convenience of modal interfaces. Greater integration between local, regional, state and national economic objectives and the needs of all categories of users including: local residents/workers, inter-urban travellers, inter-regional travellers, tourists, local and regional businesses, national freight forwarders is also required.

Pacific Highway Upgrade

In terms of the highway upgrade it is important to ensure:

- adequate consideration of the impacts of major highway development on the region's secondary roads network;
- the separation of local and interstate traffic to the greatest extent possible;
- elimination of known safety black spots and areas of conflict between different categories of users and the utilisation of divided carriageways to separate traffic flow;
- adequate community engagement in transport planning, decision-making and management

to ensure that the transport system reflects the social and cultural values of the community;
- management of the impact of freight movements to preserve residential amenity by, for example, the use of limited access zones and heavy vehicle curfews;
- the use of technical innovation to mitigate transport related noise, visual and air pollution;
- the introduction of strategies to alleviate the environmental impacts of high traffic volumes and congestion;
- the alignment of transport planning and development with the protection of high value agricultural lands and environmental conservation values; and
- preservation of natural and cultural landscape values as a necessary condition for transport infrastructure development.

In the case of the Ewingsdale and Tintenbar, and Ballina and Woodburn upgrading proposals, the Development Board encourages full consideration of the importance of the protection of regionally and state significant agricultural land. The proposed routes in both of these areas has potential to negatively impact on the economic viability of businesses and industry sectors (horticulture, coffee, sugar cane etc), and further flow on effects. A full analysis of the costs and benefits, in both economic and social terms is required as a matter of urgency.

Conclusion
The Development Board encourages the General Standing Committee No. 4 to ensure consideration of these comments in the inquiry. For further information on any of the matters raised in this submission, please contact Katrina Luckie on 02 6622 4011.

Regards

Katrina Luckie
Executive Director

Encl:
- Regional Industry and Economic Plan: Draft, May 2005.
- Working Paper for a Regional Industry and Economic Plan, November 2003.