roads australia
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Submission on NSW Government's Future Transport Strategy

INTRODUCING ROADS AUSTRALIA

Roads Australia (RA) is the peak body for roads within an integrated transport system, representing an industry that contributes $207 billion annually to the economy and supports 1.3 million jobs. RA has over 150 members and brings industry, government and communities together to lead the evolution of Australia's roads, integrated transport and mobility.

SUBMISSION

RA welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Government's Future Transport Strategy.

RA's 5 Policy Streams (Safety, Capacity, Transport Reform, Customer Experience and Sustainability) have been investigating many issues raised in the topic papers and we have provided comments on selected questions raised in those papers.

HOW WE TRAVEL

What are the systematic barriers or opportunities for the NSW government improving local streets for walking, cycling and better neighbourhood liveability?

The choices people make on how they move around are very important as we move to decarbonise our economy. If we only transition all our vehicle fleet away from fossil fuels to zero emission energy sources we will still have negative outcomes (eg, congestion, safety and public health) and will not be optimising the use of our roads and our limited kerb space. This is why increasing the share of trips taken by active and public transport is important as it helps to optimise the use of limited resources – road and kerb space.

Flexibility, openness to innovation, and community engagement before and after applying treatments that encourage active transport, are all important elements to achieve success.

Additionally it is important for governments to clearly outline their policy goals (such as increasing the number of active transport trips) so that individuals can understand why data is being collected and decisions are being made.

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Our local streets and kerb space are called on to support a lot of different uses. As populations grow and new transport forms are introduced the complexity of managing local streets and kerbs will also increase, as will likely conflict between uses. For example, while the NSW Productivity Commission has called on government to expand the use of personal mobility devices like e-scooters[1] concern has been raised about safety and the impact on the walkability of a neighbourhood[2].

New tools are being developed and used, such as machine learning, that can gather and use data and technology to build an understanding of the needs of the many transport user cohorts in a neighbourhood. While this will not replace talking to community members about their needs, it can improve data analysis for decision making.

Data from fixed sources such as cameras, and in the future from connected vehicles, will allow a shift to smarter streets and roads. This data can be processed and used in real-time to ensure that road space is optimised when volume constraints occur. For example, cameras can count the number of people waiting to cross a street and prioritise pedestrian time over private cars.

What transport improvements would allow the regions to capitalise on increased remote or hybrid ways of working?

Aside from having fast, frequent and punctual transport connections between regional centres and major cities, planning for and providing appropriate and customer friendly first and last trip transport connections in those regional centres is imperative.

Allowing commercial use of transport assets can also assist. Some examples include the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transport's support of transit-oriented development around station precincts to develop complete communities[3], or the Victorian state-owned transport asset owner, VicTrack, sharing available fibre-optic lines used for transport and government communications with commercial internet providers[4].

PARKING IN CITIES

How can parking controls be modernised in accessible areas?

On-street parking is just one of the many demands on our roads and kerbs and, similar to the discussion under **How we travel,** flexibility, openness to innovation and community engagement are key to managing these competing demands.

Off-street parking controls that restrict parking places can be a tool to produce a positive behavioural shift to public and active transport options, thus improving outcomes in public health, road safety and congestion, but there are caveats. The strongest of these is ensuring the public and active transport options are safe, accessible to as many people as possible, including visitors, and provided at the times that they need it.

[1] Recommendation 4.4, NSW Productivity Commission White Paper 2021
[2] https://www.news.com.au/finance/business/travel/escooter-trial-wont-happen-nsw-transport-minister-andrew-constance-says/news-story/f237cd49826b87a7fd440dad715f63b7
[3] https://www.bart.gov/about/business/tod
[4] https://www.aussiebroadband.com.au/blog/aussie-broadband-signs-strategic-fibre-swap-partnership/

Incorporating parking availability, booking and payment systems into online journey planning could also assist in shifting trip choice away from private transport to active and public transport options.

While not a comprehensive list there are also many exempted needs that will continue to require parking spaces appropriate to their needs in every residential and commercial environment. Some of these include in-bound and out-bound commercial movement of goods (noting that everything from meals to large building materials move in and out of our neighbourhoods), people providing professional and trade services to the residents (not just tradies, but health care professionals and other service providers delivering important services for people in their homes), waste removal services and of course access to parking to allow people who, because of disabilities or for some other valid reason, are unable to use the provided active or public transport options. These exempted need spaces will be required even more in places where it has been deemed that the limited road and kerb space in a neighbourhood is better off being used for purposes other than parking.

How should parking levels be determined in different locations?

To meet the needs for parking spaces, including those exempted needs mentioned above, data can help provide understanding of the current needs of the cohorts of transport user, but also alert government to changes in behaviour that may require intervention. This data should not only consider the usage of various parking spaces, but the use of the transport modes to and from the neighbourhood.

For on-road parking spaces, technology and data captured from fixed sites and from connected vehicles will allow dynamic changes to the use of these spaces as well as the cost to park.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

How could transport targets be differentiated within cities, or between cities and regions?

Should targets be adopted to limit traffic growth? If so, where?

In order to decarbonise we need to transition our transport fleet to zero emission vehicles. This transition will occur in different timeframes and in different ways depending on location and transport task. There is work underway in Sydney to improve public transport links and to install recharging facilities for zero emission vehicles.

Optimising the use of a limited asset like road space is important too. Government policy interventions, including road user and congestion pricing, can be tested and assessed in different environments using today's technology in order to gather sufficient information on the positive and negative impacts of these interventions. There are areas of Sydney, such as the Central Business District, where congestion is an issue. These known hot-spots could be early case studies of the potential in the Australian market for pricing interventions.

Any tool that seeks to understand where it is possible to discourage private car use needs to ensure that the provision of other modes provides to the user an improved value. This value has historically been seen as time savings or convenience, but in some sections of the community environmental impacts and other community-based benefits are now viewed as more worthy of their choice. Providing community information on the environmental benefits of trip choice within any journey planning tool could assist in hitting targets.

Collecting and analysing data on mobility from the telecommunications and navigation providers is one current method of understanding what trips people are taking and on what modes. In the future, the collection of trip information through road user charges and public transport ticketing can add significant information about the choices and modes used by transport users. This information can be used to not only highlight where issues may be occurring in government policy but also allow modelling to occur so that government interventions do not have unanticipated negative outcomes.

SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

How can Transport incentivise and support a circular economy through the design and use of its assets, resources and materials?

How can Transport improve its management of biodiversity?

Many successful trials of recycled materials in transport construction have been conducted in Australia over recent years. These trials have generated significant experience within industry and state road and transport agencies and will assist in helping to meet the demand for material as the scale and number of transport projects increase over coming years.

To move towards a circular economy of materials there needs to be a good understanding of the supply chain for materials, both demand and supply, to achieve a balance that does not lead to failed businesses or unmet government goals.

Improvements in material use and biodiversity can also be made by making time before the project has commenced to design and plan the outcomes being sought. Allowing more time in the design phase and being open to working cooperatively with industry can boost innovation and reduce material demands as well as lead to better outcomes on vegetation impacts and biodiversity outcomes.

Nationally consistent and accepted standards and specifications on the use of recycled materials in construction will further improve their take up. Support for additional research, testing, and data will be required to give clients confidence to optimise the use of recycled content materials in road projects.

Incentivising the use of recycled material in assets through procurement practices and partnerships could also result in improvements.

How can Transport work best with the private and public sector to transform the NSW transport and energy networks with clean energy technology?

Transport is a significant asset owner and has the opportunity to leverage those assets to support government goals.

Sydney Trains electricity network could support fast charging station roll-outs similar to the Ausgrid/JOLT charging stations[5]. TfNSW's vast land holdings around freeways could be utilised as technology testbeds in partnerships with research organisations like The Ray in the United States.

RESILIENT TRANSPORT NETWORKS

How should we incorporate climate change when planning for new centres or cities and major new infrastructure?

Already infrastructure is being developed to manage natural disasters and other impacts from climate change.

If infrastructure is damaged, then a "build back better" procedure can reduce the likelihood and the cost of having to rebuild when there is another disaster on the network.

DECARBONISING FREIGHT

How can the NSW Government accelerate the adoption of zero emissions freight transport?

The road freight sector is made up predominantly of small operators and shifting to zero emissions will require national coordination, especially for the heavy, interstate road freight sector. At this moment, there is no viable solution to replace diesel for these long-distance runs.

By supporting the testing and the installation of new refuelling measures the light and medium freight market could commence the transition to zero emission freight vehicles.

In parallel, the government could consider an education or behaviour campaign to explain the environmental impact of the choices people make to see if they can be nudged into supporting more sustainable freight options.

What types of targets would provide investment confidence for industry?

Given the relatively small size of the Australian market, any targets set should attempt to be nationally consistent and correspond with measures taken in overseas markets to ensure Australia does not become a dumping ground for fossil fuel vehicles.

FUNDING OUR FUTURE NETWORKS AND OPERATIONS

What non-fare revenue measures can efficiently fund Transport operations?

While acknowledging it is a challenging reform, RA supports the introduction of a fair and nationally consistent road user charge. Providing a direct connection between the use of an asset and the fee to use it makes it easier for customers to make informed financial and environmental decisions about their choice of mode for any trips they wish to take.

[5] https://www.ausgrid.com.au/About-Us/News/Ausgrid-and-JOLT-Launch-Charging-Network-for-EV-users

The road user charge should also be flexible enough that it can also achieve other government policy goals such as reducing congestion and supporting public health and safety outcomes.

What technologies or innovations can deliver better transport outcomes and better value?

Improvements to asset management and structural health monitoring are being developed in Australia and around the world. The International Transport Federation recently released a report on the increased use of data-driven maintenance for rail and road infrastructure[6] and the Victorian Government has partnered with Xerox to test a new system of remote monitoring of bridges and other structures[7].

These new technologies are expected to provide improved data and information about assets, reducing the need for unnecessary timetabled maintenance while also alerting and preventing catastrophic failures.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The future for transport is exciting, with reform and change expected to fundamentally transform the way we move around our cities and countryside. This will also have large ramifications for the way we build and maintain our assets.

Change can however be frightening to the community, especially if they are not kept informed of the purpose and goals. This is why it is important for the NSW Government to discuss these matters and seek the feedback from industry and communities around the topics being raised.

The technology and data led future that will soon be on us has the potential to deliver significant positive outcomes for the people of NSW, financially, environmentally and socially.

For more information about this submission please contact me at michael@roads.org.au or 03 9821 5255.

Yours sincerely

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[6] ITF (2021), "Data-driven Transport Infrastructure Maintenance", *International Transport Forum Policy Papers*, No. 95, OECD Publishing, Paris.
[7] https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/new-tech-keep-our-bridges-open-and-strong