

# TRANSPORT PRIORITIES

## **The unexploited potential role of roads**

- Urban transport issues can be addressed in an affordable way if roads are made to play a greater role in providing mass public transport.
- At present in the major cities across Australia (and many cities elsewhere), roads not only account for about 90% of all passenger travel, but also occupy some 30% of the total urban land areas.
- Roads represent an enormous public infrastructure investment and are potentially the only corridors capable of delivering affordable mass public transport across whole cities within a short timeframe, such as 2020.
- Of course many urban roads are congested, especially in the weekday morning and afternoon peak demand periods and this is a consequence of the massive numbers of private cars using them.

## **The current dilemma**

- A common response to public transport and road congestion issues is to propose new or expanded mass transport systems segregated from the road network in order to attract car users onto public transport.
- However, the segregated mass transport systems (whether heavy rail, light rail, bus transit roads etc) are proving to be so costly that they cannot be implemented quickly enough, across whole cities, to reduce overall car usage.
- Large increases in transport budgets are unlikely to be sustainable, given issues like the high demand for other government services and the community's limited ability to pay more taxes.

## **A new bus concept**

- Instead of making further commitments to new mass transport systems segregated from the road network, the focus over the coming decade should be to renew and expand the on-road bus service network. This would significantly increase whole of city road use efficiency and productivity.
- It can be achieved by introducing thousands of new, environmentally friendly buses across each major Australian city over the next decade, without altering the existing road and public transport infrastructure (beyond current commitments).
- The cost would be about the same as building one new rail line in each city but the benefits, in terms of increased mass transit, would be substantial and distributed across whole metropolitan areas.

- As well, each new bus would have the potential to take several cars off the road thus reducing road congestion, creating additional road space and allowing many new bus routes to operate without the need for bus-only lanes.
- On environmental grounds, bus transport is superior to car travel and has advantages over rail proposals, which would further increase the demand for coal-fired power. In future, buses could be designed to operate more on compressed gas and to utilise hybrid gas/battery-electric engines.
- This concept would also give rise to an opportunity to consider the development of an Australian low-emissions bus building industry.

### **A Sydney Scenario**

For Sydney, which has similar figures to many other major cities, the numbers are:

- Over the Sydney Greater Metropolitan Area, including Newcastle and Wollongong, there are just over 5 million people, with each travelling an average 37 kilometres every weekday.
- There are nearly 3 million cars and about 700,000 car trips made in the busiest hour over the whole area.
- Cars account for 81.5% of total weekday passenger-kilometres travelled, including car drivers.
- By comparison, the train share is 9.5%, bus services 4.5%, walking 3% and other modes 1.5% (taxi, cycling, etc).
- Sydney's total bus fleet is in the order of 4,500 buses.

Various scenarios for future mode shares can be discussed.

- My suggested Sydney scenario is to increase the bus fleet by around 9,000 buses. Its capital cost is likely to be approximately \$6 billion, which is generally less than the cost of one new rail line.
- That would allow some travel to shift (from car to bus, rail to bus and car to rail), with the car share potentially reduced (by 9%) to 72.5%, bus increased to 13.5% and rail remaining at around 9.5%.
- Peak hour car trips could potentially be reduced (by 9%) from 700,000 to 640,000 trips, easing congestion and creating space on the existing roads for the additional 9,000 new buses.
- To achieve this same mode shift to rail would require doubling the rail network capacity, which would involve building several new rail lines at many times the bus scenario cost.

- This scenario (9,000 new buses) has the potential to resolve Sydney's current passenger transport capacity issues. To address ongoing growth in travel demand, additional initiatives such as more bus or rail schemes could be developed in the future according to actual growth rates being experienced.

### **Where to from here**

Additional feasibility study, including conducting market research, exploring delivery options and preparing budgets, is warranted to test this type of scenario.

My background is as an individual who worked for many years in government as a civil engineer, manager and policy adviser, including roles in relation to transport planning and Olympic transport.

I have no pecuniary interest in these matters and am happy to answer any enquiries that might arise from this submission.

Regards

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