

## Urban Mobility

### 1. The impact of Urban Mobility in your life

#### Introduction

Australian capital cities are home to around 65% of our total population. Low density, sprawling suburbs have been created aided by the rapid improvement of the road system and expanded ownership of private motor vehicles.

In contrast, for decades Australia's public passenger rail infrastructure and services have been hamstrung in most States by poor planning and massive under-funding by successive State governments. At the same time the Commonwealth's policy development and investment has been limited based on the long-held view that the States are best placed to deal with metropolitan and local complexities of public transport.

The result, a failure to provide long-term planning for major infrastructure to service urban needs, including major urban growth.

The growth in urban travel and private motor vehicle ownership has increased congestion and exhaust emissions generating community health and environmental problems.

Now we see the community reacting to global concerns about rising fuel prices and climate change with unprecedented increased use of public transport passenger services instead of their cars. They are also demanding greatly improved services.

But are governments waking up at last to this massive need to fix public transport passenger infrastructure and services?

There may be signs of changes to the Commonwealth's view on funding with a ***Senate Inquiry into the Investment of Commonwealth and State Funds in Public Transport Infrastructure and Services*** concluding and reporting in August 2009.

#### Link:

[Investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services](#)

What is needed now is a planning and funding framework that will transcend the old boundaries of state's jurisdictions and move towards a truly national structure of planning and funding. ARA envisages a structure which incorporates two fundamental components being a national transport planning capacity and a national funding structure.

ARA recommended establishing a new National Transport Planning Authority (NTPA) accountable to COAG.

Its brief would be to develop a National Strategic Transport Plan and to guide the effective disbursement of government funds to meet transport infrastructure needs in the long term (30 to 40 years). These funds would be held and managed by a proposed Transport Infrastructure Fund which would be funded jointly by the Commonwealth and States, and would disburse funds according to the National Plan, on behalf of COAG. Funds would be targeted towards optimising the public transport mix in cities and major arterial roads. The role of the Building Australia Fund could be augmented to accommodate long term funding for transport infrastructure and service delivery.

NTPA would work with States and Territories to integrate planning and investment cycles for infrastructure and town planning, with a clear focus on the national benefit to be derived from optimal development of transport in cities and major arterial transport links. Its brief is clearly passenger and freight movement by land.

NTPA membership would include high level representation from all jurisdictions including the Commonwealth, Infrastructure Australia, the proposed Transport Infrastructure Fund and the National Transport Commission and it would be advised by Industry and key stakeholder representatives.

## Imagine Your Life without Public Transport

Whether you choose to drive a car or take public transport, having access to a safe, efficient and accessible public transport system directly affects our quality of life and the ease with which we can get to work, school or university, do the shopping, go to see the doctor or dentist or visit family and friends.

Overall, we presently choose to take public transport for around only 10% of all trips that we need to take. But during morning peak travel times, public transport use to access city areas ranges from over 50% in Perth, to 60% in Melbourne and over 80% in Sydney.

## Impact of Urban Transport in Your Life

Public transport plays a critical role in making sure our cities operate effectively and efficiently allowing all users to move around our cities as easily as possible. This requires fully integrated passenger services that optimise mobility for all modes incorporating rail, bus, pedestrian, cycle and urban ferry options, in a seamless mix of transport modes.

Effective public transport offers significant benefits to our quality of life in all forms:

- **Our economic life** is improved by reducing the costs due to traffic congestion, the amount of money we need to finance new roads and having an alternative to paying increasingly high fuel prices;
- **Our social life** is improved by reducing the negative health impacts of motor vehicle pollution and ensuring everyone in our community, particularly those without cars, can get to where they need to go with confidence – a job interview, the doctor or to visit family and friends; and
- **Our environmental life** is improved by reducing the harmful effects of greenhouse gases on our environment.

Specifically rail transport offers tremendous benefits to society as a highly capable, people-moving transport mode. This derives from a number of aspects including:

- rail is an integral and very significant part of the whole urban passenger transport solution;
- dedicated rail track in a protected corridor takes less urban land-space and is safer – allowing more compact and safer cities;
- rail's speed and reliability owing to dedicated rail corridor;
- rail is the lowest emission mode of motorised transport – minimal urban air and noise pollution and greenhouse gas emissions;
- rail readily accommodates human-powered wheeled vehicles e.g. push chairs, wheelchairs, bicycles;
- rail is highly efficient for transporting at peak demands – journey to work and special events;
- rail's efficient use of oil and land;
- rail's accessibility and social inclusion;
- rail is highly suited to underpin new transit-oriented developments; and
- public transport, particularly rail passenger transport, enabling people to be active travellers – walking or cycling to railway station/interchange; road traffic congestion is reduced.

## More or Less Public Transport?

The answer is really up to you!

It is quite clear that there are very good environmental, social and wider economic reasons for improving our public transport services. The real questions to consider are:

- HOW should we fund our public transport services?
- WHAT roles should we, including governments, play in improving public transport and infrastructure services for the whole community?

Given the need to act on climate change, it is no longer appropriate for Australia to manage its public transport needs through a politically charged process. The community demands to be given public transport infrastructure and services that will meet demands and perform to world best practice standards, as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Australia as a nation needs to do something and we need to do it now. No longer can we allow the status quo to remain.

### **What can we do?**

Our public transport infrastructure and services should involve the Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local governments, public and private sector transport operators and the community. The relationships between the parties are very complex and there are many opportunities to improve the way we plan, fund and deliver and even use public transport infrastructure and services in Australia.

We each have an important role to play and we can all do better – the first step is to acknowledge the need for improved public transport in all Australian cities; the second is to prioritise the actions necessary to achieve it.

### **How do we go about it?**

The rail industry, through the Australasian Railway Association (ARA), is constantly seeking ways of getting our message across to the Commonwealth, States and Territory and Local governments.

It is important that Members of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Parliaments know that the community supports rail industry initiatives that deliver economic, social and environmental benefits to Australia.

This RAILmates website has been developed to allow the community to *Have Your Say* on specific campaign policy issues affecting rail transport, whether it be related to passenger or freight.

Ongoing electronic messages will be made available for sending to Commonwealth and State & Territory Members of Parliament based on ARA's key messages in its submission to this Senate Inquiry.