

Submission to the Draft Future Transport Strategy 2056

December 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Local government recognises the importance of the transport task in all areas of the state, and is an essential partner in the planning and delivery of transport in both metropolitan Sydney and regional areas of NSW. Councils have direct responsibility for the 160,000 km local and regional road network and regional aviation and airport infrastructure. The link between local and regional planning and the delivery and availability of transport infrastructure and services is critical.
- Local government supports the aims of the Draft Future Transport Strategy 2056. It will provide the essential strategic planning context to guide councils' in their local and regional land use planning and infrastructure investment decisions.
- LGNSW has long emphasised the need for much better integration of land use and transport planning, closely aligned with a committed and funded infrastructure delivery program.
- LGNSW is strongly supportive of public transport within both urban and regional areas of the state, and within an overall integrated planning and land use context. Councils are essential stakeholders in the planning and provision of services to support development in their local and regional areas.
- Public transport in Sydney and other urban areas needs to be expanded rapidly to support projected growth. A fast, efficient commuter friendly public transport system is essential to the effective functioning of large and growing cities as evidenced in cities globally. LGNSW acknowledges the public transport initiatives that are currently committed, but questions whether they are adequate. It is concerning that some of the exhibited future public transport links are not yet committed and questions the timeliness of likely delivery. There is a growing need to reduce car dependency and road congestion.
- Rural and regional communities need improved transport options within their regions and to other centres including Sydney. LGNSW encourages measures to provide more flexible transport options in all regions, for example by combining existing school bus and community transport services into a flexible model that provides access for all communities in areas where traditional public transport is difficult to provide.
- Local government acknowledges the importance of improving the efficiency of freight transport to improve productivity and support economic growth in national, state regional and local contexts. In addressing these demands, councils must balance the economic benefits associated with the growing freight task with the impacts on vulnerable road and bridge infrastructure and the road safety, amenity concerns of their local communities and resource implications.
- Local government considers rail to be the most appropriate form of transport for mass/bulk products, and councils feel that rail transport must be explored as an alternative to road transport where possible, through use of existing under-utilised rail lines and through the development of new trunk routes such as the North-South Inland Rail project.
- Local government is a key partner in the provision of aviation services to regional NSW. The development and implementation of a regional aviation strategy for NSW should address the ongoing viability of regional aviation services and council managed regional airport infrastructure.

- The Transport Strategy and road safety plan must address road safety priorities on the council managed local road network, including investment in safety related road infrastructure across the network, appropriate speed zones for rural roads, and the prevalence of alcohol related accidents in regional areas.
- The emerging and transforming technologies associated with connected and automated vehicles and the growth of the electric car fleet has implications for councils with responsibilities as local road and planning authorities.

1 OPENING

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for local government in NSW, representing all NSW general-purpose councils and associate members including special-purpose county councils. LGNSW facilitates the development of an effective community based system of local government in the State.

LGNSW welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Draft Future Transport Strategy 2056.

This submission also includes comments on the supporting Draft Greater Sydney Services and Infrastructure Plan, the Draft Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan, and the Draft Road Safety Plan. LGNSW proposes to make a separate submission to the Draft Freight and Ports Plan when it is released.

1.1 Introductory Comments

Local government recognises the importance of the overall transport task in all areas of the state. The provision of public transport contributes not only to the long-term sustainability of our communities, but also provides vital access to employment, education and services. It is vital in remote locations or for disadvantaged groups. Highways are the arteries of the state and council managed local roads and bridges provide essential first and last mile connections for communities and businesses in urban, regional and rural areas.

The plans need to not only consider links between places but activities and uses at the local scale. The capacity of existing services must also be taken into account. The emerging concept of the 30-minute city links accessibility to transport planning at the local scale in metropolitan areas. Metropolitan transport planning must consider local government mobility plans, the role of active transport, modal substitution and emerging trends in passenger and consumer behaviour.

Regional transport plans traditionally address journeys between regional centres to access essential services and seek to enable the timely and efficient delivery of goods to market. Inter and intra-regional travel is of critical importance and may involve brokering investment and access to networks and centres in other states and territories.

Freight transport is critical to the economic growth and development of the state but the needs of the freight industry must be balanced with the impacts on road and bridge infrastructure and the amenity concerns of their local communities.

Our rural and regional communities need both land and air connections within their regions and to other centres, including Sydney.

This submission focuses on key areas of local government engagement in transport, including issues relating to transport and infrastructure planning, freight connectivity especially on council managed local roads, passenger transport in urban and regional areas, regional aviation services and airport infrastructure, emerging technology and road safety. Previous transport strategies have lacked a committed and funded implementation plan to ensure delivery in a timely and consistent manner. LGNSW urges the Government to take

immediate action to ensure that there is a financial commitment to the key components of the Future Transport Strategy 2056 and firm funding and implementation timelines to ensure their delivery. Local government welcomes the strategic planning context of the Strategy which will guide its own individual or regional land use planning and infrastructure investment priorities.

1.2 Importance of local government

Local government is an essential partner in the planning and delivery of transport in both metropolitan Sydney and regional NSW. Local government:

- has direct responsibility for the 160,000 km local and regional road network;
- plays a major role in the provision of regional aviation services and airport infrastructure; and
- facilitates the delivery of public transport services and provides supporting infrastructure.

Councils have a wealth of local, district and regional knowledge about what is happening ‘on the ground’ and an important role in providing a local voice to ensure amenity and liveability in the places and spaces of their local areas within a sound asset management and investment framework. For this reason, local government must be seen as a real partner in planning and investment processes, not just another stakeholder making submissions during the public exhibition phase.

1.3 Setting the Scene

LGNSW commends the Transport Plan for its focus on strategic planning and the intention to integrate planning for growth and economic development with transport and infrastructure provision, in both Sydney and across regional NSW.

Sydney is set to grow to more than 7.5 million people by 2056, and the NSW population to more than 11 million. Freight volumes are estimated to double in the Greater Sydney area and grow by a quarter in regional NSW and the overall transport network is preparing for 28 million trips a day by 2056, up from 16 million in 2013. The planning, funding and delivery of transport infrastructure and services for the next 40 years is crucially important.

Local government considers it important that growth targets are aligned with the delivery of upfront infrastructure support from the NSW Government. The proposal to integrate growth planning and the provision of infrastructure has therefore been well-received. However, LGNSW would like the final District Plans in Sydney and Regional Plans in other areas of the state to contain more detail on the framework and mechanisms to make this a reality. Major funding shortfalls for local infrastructure must be urgently addressed.

There is no doubt that getting the appropriate mix and timing of transport infrastructure are key elements in determining the future productivity and liveability of NSW. LGNSW acknowledges the Government’s record investment in major transport infrastructure such as the Sydney metro rail, light rail, motorways such as Northconnex, as well as the ongoing Pacific, Hume and Newell Highway upgrades. However, we remain concerned that planning and commitments for future infrastructure needs may not match the ambitious growth scenarios outlined for NSW. In particular the transport needs at local levels will require significant investment in local and regional roads and bridges, cycleways, footpath, local interchanges,

bus stops and supporting infrastructure to sustain the 'liveability' aspirations of the Greater Sydney, Regional and Transport Plans. In short we need the integration of planning and investment decisions, across all three spheres of government and across delivery agencies to provide essential services to our communities as growth takes place.

2. SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT FUTURE TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2056

2.1 Planning issues

It is encouraging that the Draft Future Transport Strategy 2056 (the Transport Strategy) was released in parallel with the Greater Sydney Commission's Draft Regional Plan for Sydney, and supporting transport plans. LGNSW advocates the development of integrated and coordinated long term strategic plans for all parts of NSW. This must involve mechanisms to ensure that local planning and infrastructure needs are linked to these higher level plans, with clear commitments and delivery strategies at the local level. The impacts of growth and economic development on our communities cannot be left to local government to manage and fund unassisted by other levels of government.

LGNSW advocacy has long emphasised the need for much better integration of land use and transport planning, closely aligned with a committed and funded infrastructure delivery program. The Transport Strategy includes a very strong emphasis on delivering integrated infrastructure and working in collaboration with relevant agencies and stakeholders, including local government, to achieve liveability, productivity and sustainability. This is welcomed.

The success of the "three cities plan" for greater Sydney will depend on the delivery of the Transport Strategy. It is critical for the NSW Government to put "their money where their mouth is" and deliver an efficient public transport system, otherwise the housing density required under the new plans will undermine the liveability of the city. Sydney cannot support the planned increases in population and density without the upfront delivery of transport infrastructure. It is a positive sign that land use planning and transport planning are to be better integrated. This is critical. The failure to integrate planning for growth with infrastructure provision has been the shortcoming of past metropolitan, regional and transport plans. Infrastructure must be put in up-front in development areas rather than waiting until the demand is there (eg the need for a new north south rail line from Campbelltown to Penrith and Richmond, and a rail link to the new zoo planned for Eastern Creek).

Having a whole-of-government commitment to the regional and district plans will be a key success factor. We are cautiously optimistic about this. We look forward to an ongoing and productive partnership in developing and delivering a sustainable, integrated and long term strategic planning framework. LGNSW will continue to advocate that the Greater Sydney Commission collaborates with councils in developing realistic long term housing targets based on state government committed transport plans. Similarly LGNSW is strongly supportive of the regional plans provided that these plans are matched by appropriate investment and funding, including of council managed infrastructure such as roads.

LGNSW is supportive of recommendations to develop a 'hub and spoke' network model radiating out from regional cities rather than a network solely centred on Sydney. Greater emphasis on east-west connections between the inland and coastal geographies will respond

to the growth of population on the coast whilst also opening up tourism and trade connections to the inland regions. Regional transport planning must be also consistent with DP&E Regional Plans, to reflect both passenger and freight transport priorities and to guide local government planning and investment strategies. Regional Services and Infrastructure Plans must include local government as key stakeholders at regional and local levels.

The Transport Plan must also address the need for enhanced freight connectivity on rural, regional and metropolitan local roads managed by councils. This will require state-wide and regional planning overlays to guide local government in its infrastructure planning processes, additional targeted funding to address freight pinch points or provide alternative routes or modes for freight transport, and capacity building and training for council staff involved in freight/heavy vehicle access assessment activities.

2.2 Infrastructure provision and funding

Infrastructure provision and funding is possibly the single greatest concern of councils faced with accommodating significant population growth and freight transport pressures over the next 20 years. Infrastructure provision and funding in the context of large population increases and the Greater Sydney Commission's District Plans' goals for productivity, sustainability and liveability, present significant challenges for both state and local government. There are parallel issues facing regional communities coping with increases in rural population, productivity and freight transport without adequate resources or funding to support the required infrastructure.

There are four key issues for councils in relation to infrastructure provision:

Current infrastructure deficit

While many existing areas may have the benefit of established infrastructure, this can be nearing or above capacity in some areas and many councils are already facing large infrastructure renewal backlogs. The backlogs are estimated to exceed \$6.3 billion across NSW, and largely relate to local road and bridge networks.

The need for certainty

In responding to successive metropolitan and regional strategies, local government has called for mechanisms that would give these plans the 'teeth' to coordinate and direct agency expenditure to meet growth and land use demands. Without this, the concern is that local government councils will be left with the legacy of poor infrastructure investment in growth areas.

Supporting growth with adequate infrastructure capacity

While the District, Regional and Transport Plans discuss 'aligning land use planning and infrastructure' and recognise the importance of infrastructure funding, the question that is yet to be fully answered is how these will be integrated and delivered.

LGNSW acknowledges that some actions are proposed in the District Plans to assist this alignment, such as a cross-agency Infrastructure Delivery Committee and the Annual Infrastructure Priority List. However, it is unclear what mechanisms will be used to link the plans' growth targets with coordination and actual agency expenditure. There needs to be further details on what forms of infrastructure the Annual Infrastructure Priority List will include. Local government maintains a one-year priority list is inadequate, and a 5 year infrastructure

priority list is needed at a minimum. Similar mechanisms need to be incorporated into Regional Plans.

Funding sources

Funding sources need to be identified and committed to enable implementation. The traditional range of infrastructure funding mechanisms - federal funding; state infrastructure contributions; local infrastructure investment; local (section 94) development contributions and voluntary planning agreements (VPAs) - are inadequate or not sufficiently flexible to meet growth needs.

There is very little in the draft District and Regional Plans or the Transport Plans about alternative funding mechanisms. However, it is positive that they introduce the concept of value capture. This is at least acknowledgement that public investment and policy changes (such as those proposed in the draft District Plans) generate enormous value uplift, and that windfall gains can and should be shared more widely with the community. However, the draft plans do not go far enough, they make no commitment to this mechanism as a viable and necessary funding option to support delivery of the District Plans, and it is not reflected as an action in the draft plan.

Councils, particularly in metropolitan Sydney, see value capture as critical to obtaining sufficient funding for much needed infrastructure, particularly in renewal areas, and many are advocating for a value capture mechanisms other than Voluntary Planning Agreements to be urgently developed and implemented. While mechanisms such as value capture may have more limited application in regional areas, councils in these areas need funding certainty to enable investment in transport infrastructure and services to support economic development in the regions and to enhance the connectedness and liveability aspects of regional centres on an equitable basis with Sydney.

LGNSW is aware that many councils and regional groups have identified particular transport projects, corridors and priorities within their local and regional areas with strategic significance for the regional and state-wide transport task. These include important areas of focus such as improved transport links between Central West NSW and Sydney, e.g. through a new Bells Line Expressway and appropriate connections with a new Castlereagh Freeway in northwest Sydney, or the new western Sydney North – South rail line being promoted by eight western Sydney councils.

2.3 Public transport

LGNSW is strongly supportive of improved public transport within both urban and regional areas of the state. The growth of Sydney and regional NSW poses major challenges to the achievement of social, economic and environmental goals. The continued development of the transport system, especially public transport, is crucial to addressing these challenges.

In rural and regional areas of the state, regular, reliable and inexpensive public transport options are required as feasible alternatives to the car for many trips, especially for disadvantaged groups, and to assist promotion of these areas as viable alternatives to Sydney for growth, development, tourism and investment.

The projected population growth and transport tasks in both metropolitan and regional areas (outlined in 1.3 above) confirm the urgency of establishing links between growth, planning and the delivery of transport infrastructure and services.

We acknowledge that the complexity of the transport task in both urban and regional areas will continue to require an appropriate mix of existing transport modes, including heavy rail, light rail, bus, ferry, car as well as walking and cycling. The key transport planning outcomes should be to encourage and provide the choice of the right mode for the right trip.

Public transport has a key role in this equation. The attractiveness of public transport compared to private vehicles is enhanced when other factors such as technology, information, timetables, common ticketing systems, easy-to-use transport interchanges, integration of services within and between modes, and service frequency, cleanliness and safety issues are addressed as essential components of the overall transport planning task.

Local government is a vitally important stakeholder in any of these and would expect to be involved in the planning for enhanced transport infrastructure, whether it is for new roads, rail links, light rail, transitway/express bus lanes or pedestrian/cycle path or transport interchanges. Many councils have developed their own local transport strategies to guide future development and transport in a complementary and integrated way.

Case study: City of Ryde Integrated Transport Strategyⁱ

The City of Ryde has developed an Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) that looks at the challenges faced by the city, and presents actions that will guide future transport planning and development to deliver a sustainable, integrated network with better active transport options.

The City of Ryde ITS aims to maximise opportunities to increase public transport and walking and cycling use, reduce the frequency and length of trips on the transport system, improve local traffic access and parking and provide a framework for a more cohesive transport network out to the year 2031. It provides a policy framework for transport and operational decisions within the City of Ryde between 2016 and 2031, as well as a foundation for more detailed investigations into specific issues or centres. It is intended to be a live document that is regularly monitored and reviewed.

Local government is also vitally interested in advocating for appropriate transport options for particular groups within local communities. Access to appropriate public transport services is crucial to social and community participation. The concept of the “accessibility gap” characterises why people cannot or do not use public transport. Elements of the gap include the spatial, cost, physical accessibility, information, and attitudinal/cultural/behavioural gaps. Overcoming these gaps will improve accessibility for different groups in the community including the ageing population and should be addressed in the Transport Strategy.

Case Study: Lake Macquarie City Council Youth Strategyⁱⁱ

The Lake Macquarie Youth Strategy 2014 – 2019 specifically identifies the ‘improvement between modes of transport and reduce barriers to access for young people’ as a key strategy to deliver improved access and service delivery for young people (pp18-19).

In this strategy council has highlighted the need to improve the linkages between modes of transport and reduce barriers to access for young people, and to collect feedback from young people about service design and performance and to feed this information back to Transport NSW and transport companies responsible for service provision in the area.

LGNSW advocates for fully accessible facilities for people with disabilities to be provided along the transport network. Councils have a role in the provision of appropriate road access and streetside facilities for bus services, especially in relation to requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act (i.e. low floor bus access to local roads, accessible bus stops, signage etc) but require additional resources to fulfil these responsibilities otherwise this becomes a cost-shift to councils. To help address this need, LGNSW has sought additional targeted funding assistance to within the existing Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CPTIGS) to address council managed fixed and informal bus stops on council managed rural and regional roads. \$3.25 million is available in the current biennial 2017/19 funding round. LGNSW also seeks additional funding to upgrade formal and informal bus stops on school bus routes in rural areas. Funding for improved bus stop infrastructure could also be built into rural and regional service level contracts that exist between the NSW government and bus operators engaged in regular passenger and/or school bus routes.

Our rural and regional communities need improved transport options within their regions and to other centres, including Sydney. LGNSW encourages measures to provide more flexible transport options in all regions and improved social equity outcomes for rural communities e.g. by converting existing school bus and community transport services into a model that provides access for all communities and flexible transport services to provide new or improved coverage to areas where traditional public transport is difficult to provide.

Case Study: Greater Hume Shire Council

Regional councils such as Greater Hume have lobbied the NSW State Government to permit school buses to be available to provide public transport options for the general public when not transporting students. These buses should be exempt from providing disabled access where other transport options are available for people with mobility issues. Within Greater Hume Shire Council (like many rural areas) public transport options from towns within the Shire to the nearest regional city are minimal, however there is an opportunity to utilise the school and/or community bus network to provide public transport options in some instances.

An example may be seen in the town of Jindera. School buses travel out of Albury to Jindera to serve various primary schools and one of these returns empty to Albury whilst the remainder stay in Jindera until the afternoon. The reverse happens in the afternoon.

There is an opportunity to utilise the empty school bus travelling back into Albury in the morning and then back out to Jindera in the afternoon for public transport.

2.4 Freight and the Local Road Network

LGNSW acknowledges the importance of freight transport for productivity and economic development in national, regional and local contexts. Local government's primary interest in freight comes from the responsibilities for its local road networks, which for most councils, especially in regional areas, is their single largest item of expenditure. The local road network is a significant component of the national and state transport system totalling in NSW some 164,000 km, or about 90% by length of all roads in the state. This local road and bridge network has an asset value of \$51.9 billion (\$17.4 billion in metropolitan Sydney, \$34.5 billion in regional areas (source: Council annual reports summarised in NRMA Local Roads Report, 2017). Most of this road network is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of heavy freight traffic.

Councils in NSW face an infrastructure renewal backlog of \$6.3 billion and an annual renewal gap of \$650 million in addressing this huge asset management task, according to research by the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia. ⁱⁱⁱ

In their recent “Funding Local Roads” report, the NRMA agreed with these findings, concluding that in addition to increasing the cost of living, the potential to expand tourism and increase agricultural and industrial freight in regional areas will also be restricted if roads are not built and maintained to a standard that can cater for existing and future traffic demand on regional roads. This in turn reduces the competitiveness of regional economies. In this study NRMA showed that freight movements are expected to increase by 213 million tonnes or over 85% to 469 million tonnes in 2036. Given that heavy vehicles impose greater damage on the road network than light vehicles, this is likely to cause considerable issues for the performance of the local road network. ^{iv}

Funding is therefore one of the key issues in local government’s attitude to the increasing freight task and its impact on local road networks. The benefits of increased freight movements to the national and state economies, to the freight and logistics industries and to their customers do not flow automatically through to councils in terms of increased revenue to address the impact incurred by growth on the roads themselves, particularly in a rate-pegged environment which exists in NSW. Councils need new funding mechanisms to be able to share in the productivity improvements accruing to the heavy vehicle and logistics industries generally through the use of higher-productivity vehicles and other transport efficiency gains, which otherwise do not provide local government with any direct financial benefit. This would provide councils with a means to address the road upgrades that these vehicles require to use local roads and to redress the huge infrastructure funding backlog facing councils around the state and nation.

Case Study: Kyogle Shire Council ^v

In its submission to the Draft NSW Future Transport 2056 Plan, Kyogle Shire Council has highlighted:

- *The need for funding programs that recognise the need for improvements to local and regional transport networks to service existing local industries, reduce the cost of doing business, increase efficiencies, and remove barriers to growth.*
- *Key industries affected are primary producers, agri-businesses, timber plantations, extractive industries, and for the various supply industries that support them.*
- *Issues that need to be addressed:*
 - *Load limited timber bridges and demand for higher mass limits*
 - *Unsealed roads in highly trafficked areas*
- *Narrow and poorly aligned roads and associated safety issues created when larger transport vehicles share these roads with residential traffic*

The identification of defined and integrated state and regional freight networks and corridors such as those outlined in the Transport Strategy and supporting regional plans will assist all spheres of government in their ongoing strategic planning, investment and infrastructure programs. Councils in particular are looking for guidance from other levels of government, including through this strategic transport plan process, to better inform their own asset management and infrastructure investment priorities, especially given the limited funding currently available.

Many councils are members of Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs), Joint Organisations or other similar regional groupings that undertake regional strategic planning to deliver economic and employment growth to their respective regions. LGNSW supports a model that will deliver additional funding, linked to these higher level transport and freight strategies, to councils via strategic regional arrangements. This may include investment in funding key freight related infrastructure on local and regional roads, e.g. heavy vehicle access on first and last mile local road connections, connectivity enhancement programs such as Fixing Country Roads and Bridges for the Bush, and other flexible options to increase productivity for particular commodities, e.g. the Grain Harvest Management Scheme. We anticipate that these opportunities will be enhanced by recent legislation confirming the roll out of Joint Organisations in the near future. LGNSW looks forward to working with government to fully utilise these regional groups to enhance local and regional transport planning and road management outcomes for councils.

Case Study: Riverina Eastern ROC (REROC) Freight plan^{vi}

This project was initiated by REROC to investigate the freight infrastructure network from a regional perspective. The implementation of integrated transport solutions for the Region is an overriding goal of the project and to that end REROC has reviewed both the rail and road transport networks that service the eastern Riverina region.

In the past councils have been concerned with road and rail movements within their own local government boundaries. This project considers the bigger picture, identifying regional issues that impact on efficient and effective freight movements from within and through the eastern Riverina region. To that end a study of the movement of vehicles and infrastructure needs from a regional basis has been undertaken. In undertaking this task REROC has identified the Freight Routes of Regional Significance; these routes have been identified in the following categories:

- 1. National and State Roads*
- 2. Regional Roads*
- 3. Local Roads*

The Plan is intended to identify the significant constraints impacting on the delivery of freight solutions in the region and to that end a matrix of weighted factors were developed to assist in assessing the overall impact of each corridor constraint. Members utilised the matrix to assess and score each constraint, the score determined the level of priority given by the Plan to the constraint. As a result of this analysis the measures required to alleviate these corridor constraints were then identified and costed.

Improving freight efficiency, while a sound macro-economic policy, does not always provide optimum outcomes for local communities, from both infrastructure impact and road safety/amenity perspectives. Many local communities, especially in urban contexts, have concerns at the effect of increased numbers and mass of heavy vehicles, especially local road safety and amenity issues. This may reflect general community attitudes to heavy vehicles, or a general lack of understanding of the benefits of higher productivity vehicles. It is vital therefore, that a transport/freight strategy include consideration of these other community impacts, attitudes and perceptions surrounding the various transport modes within the strategy to better establish a social license for freight within local communities.

Consideration of the needs of the freight industry in both individual developments (e.g. heavy and light commercial vehicle access to shopping centre loading docks) and in a more general strategic planning context (e.g. appropriate access roads, truck parking and break-up areas, driver rest areas etc.) is also needed. Related to this are the planning issues associated with appropriate 'span of hours' (i.e. approved opening hours) for industrial and warehouse type development to facilitate more efficient access by the freight industry, while also taking into account the traffic and amenity impact on local communities and residents. Greater levels of consultation and the involvement of councils and local communities in key local and regional freight planning activities must be included to address and enhance the road freight industry's 'social license' for freight in urban areas.

While LGNSW has welcomed the Fixing Country Roads program, recent work undertaken by LGNSW, Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia, has shown that a similar funding need exists in the Sydney and other metropolitan areas as the result of ever increasing first and last mile demands on local roads in urban areas. This is especially characterised by significant increases in construction, logistics, port access and general delivery related road freight in recent years. LGNSW has requested the State Government consider a \$50 million funding program to support this need.

2.5 Rail Transport

Local government considers rail to be the most appropriate form of transport for mass/bulk products. In many regional areas of the state, rail branch line closures have forced additional heavy vehicle movements onto adjacent local road networks. Councils feel that rail transport must be explored as an alternative to road transport where possible, through:

- the use of existing under-utilised rail lines;
- the development of new trunk routes such as the North-South Inland Rail project; and
- the use of appropriate financial pricing signals to encourage where possible a greater degree of competition between rail and road modes of transport.

This issue is not restricted to rural and regional areas of the state. Councils in metropolitan areas are facing increasing levels of heavy vehicle traffic on already congested local roads, for example in areas located near or affected by access to Port Botany in Sydney. We welcome initiatives to greatly increase the rail modal share of this traffic. These include the recent northern and southern Sydney freight corridor projects, intermodal terminals at Moorebank, Enfield and other strategic locations, and duplication of the existing Port Botany rail line. Longer term commitments such as the Maldon – Dombarton rail link to Port Kembla are also required to ensure that this modal shift to rail is sustained and able cope with the projected increase in the freight task over the life of the Transport Plan.

A freight issue of particular concern to councils in the grain growing regions of NSW is the condition and the closure of rail lines with primary role of transporting grain. The running down and closure of these lines means that grain is being carried increasing distances by road, often on local roads. This is placing increased pressure on these roads without any direct recompense to the council for the extra damage to local roads by the increased traffic.

The use of higher productivity vehicles to carry grain greater distance in some cases places increased pressure to upgrade the roads and bridges to cater for these vehicles, and at the same time further decreases the relative competitiveness of any rail modal option. Local

government perceives this creeping transfer of grain haulage from rail to road as a direct cost shift from state owned rail systems to council owned and managed roads without proper analysis and regard to achieving the best overall transport economic outcome.

Case Study - Parkes Shire Council - Inland Rail ^{vii}

Parkes Shire Council has welcomed the Government's announcement in the 2017/18 budget for \$8.4 billion for the development of the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail.

The new Melbourne to Brisbane freight line will immensely improve freight efficiencies in Australia, transforming freight movement in Australia and create outstanding investment opportunities in Parkes and surrounding regions of NSW.

Already a major transport centre, Parkes is moving quickly to capitalise on the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland rail. The Parkes National Logistics Hub, the largest greenfield intermodal site in NSW, is one of Australia's most promising industrial developments and a project of strategic importance to the freight industry. A report by Regional Development Central West has found that the economic impact of the Inland Rail project to NSW's Central West region is estimated at \$216M over 60 years and that the region is well positioned to benefit from economic and supply chain development. The study found that around 490 new jobs could be created in the region during the construction phase. Post-construction, it's estimated that around 150 new jobs in the agriculture, manufacturing and mining sectors could be created in Parkes, Forbes and Lachlan local government areas alone.

In addition to employment and investment opportunities, the establishment of a National Logistics Hub in Parkes will offer cheaper, faster and more efficient modal choices, and offer a centralised storage and distribution point for a range of commodities including agricultural products

Parkes Shire Council is looking forward to working with the Federal and State government to improve linkages from the inland rail spine back to the New South Wales ports. An efficient rail system spine is critical and the recent Federal budget announcement is a major step towards creating the Inland Rail as a corridor of opportunity.

2.6 Regional Aviation

Local government is a key stakeholder in the provision of aviation services to regional Australia. Regional airports are almost exclusively owned and operated by councils and the infrastructure and associated airline services are vital components for the economic and social development of regional areas. There are some 60 Civil Aviation Safety Authority certified or registered council owned and managed aerodromes in NSW. This includes 26 airports serving over 2 million passengers annually on regulated and deregulated regular passenger services, as well as many other charter, emergency and general aviation services.

In terms of passenger numbers, almost 1.1 million people travelled on regional air services in NSW in 2015 on larger unregulated routes such as those from Dubbo or Wagga Wagga, and the smaller regulated routes such as Broken Hill, Merimbula and Parkes.^{viii} The majority of these services are between these regional airports and Sydney. At the same time, many regional services and centres are dependent on efficient and equitable access to major airports such as Sydney.

LGNSW agrees with the recommendation to develop and implement a regional aviation strategy for NSW. We believe this strategy should consider the following key issues.

2.6.1 Accessibility to services

It is the policy of LGNSW that all residents of rural and regional NSW should be afforded equitable access to ongoing and reliable air services. Modern and efficient air services between country areas and the state capital are essential for the social and economic wellbeing of all residents, and particularly for country residents who rely on air travel increasingly for access to the wide range of services no longer available outside Sydney. This includes travel related to essential business, education, health and medical purposes.

We are concerned that the proposed focus within the Transport Plan on larger key regional hubs may directly affect many smaller regional centres and the viability of their air services, airport and connectivity with Sydney and other areas. Access to regional NSW is also vital for Sydney-based professionals, administrators, businesses and investors with responsibilities or interests in regional areas. Efficient access to regional aviation services on an equitable basis is essential.

In a general sense, regional communities remain concerned that while the existing state licensing arrangements have been adequate, the reliability of individual operators and services has been marginal in some cases. The continued uncertainty in the regional aviation industry highlights the need for a policy response by both the Commonwealth and State Governments to ensure the availability of air services to regional areas.

Operators in this sector of the industry, including Regional Express, have themselves raised doubts about the future viability of their services.

It is vital to communities that access is maintained and that services are appropriate. Pricing mechanisms should not focus solely on the optimal or economically most efficient outcome, but should also address the continued provision of viable services delivering frequency and quality of service appropriate to the needs and size of regional communities. Our rural and regional constituents have consistently expressed the view that their access to air services should be comparable to that available to people in metropolitan centres. This includes ensuring that there are sufficient incentives set in place to maintain on-going viability, for example by raising the regulatory passenger threshold in some cases where route/operator viability has been marginal.

2.6.2 Regional Airline Access to Sydney Airport

LGNSW supports the proposal to increase the availability of regional slots at Sydney's airports during peak hours, and to generally increase aviation connections from regional cities and centres to interstate destinations in addition to Sydney.

The issue of access to Sydney airport is one that is crucial to councils in regional NSW. Currently there about 64,000 regional aircraft movements at Sydney Airport every year, representing a significant 20% of all aircraft movements. ^{ix} While cognisant of the economic efficiency of using larger aircraft to manage and expand the capacity of Sydney Airport, LGNSW believes there are other broader economic, social and regional development issues that also need to be considered. Local government in NSW, including both urban and regional councils, is united in its support for continued regional access to Kingsford Smith Airport at affordable prices. While the proposed Sydney West airport will have long-term effects on airline usage and access to Sydney, it will be many years before the airport is open and operational to the extent where it is able to provide realistic access, connections with other services and ground transport connectivity comparable to the existing Sydney airport facility.

We are concerned that the current Sydney Airport Master Plan projects a reduction in the percentage of regional movements at Sydney Airport from the existing 20% down to 18% in 2036, with regional passenger numbers similarly decreasing from 6% down to 4% in that same period. This suggests a gradual tightening of aircraft, slot and terminal availability in favour of larger international or domestic carriers, and a greater emphasis on alternative access such as the new Sydney West Airport.

LGNSW believes it would be a retrograde step for federal or state government, or commercial decisions from the managers of existing Sydney Airport or future Sydney West Airport to diminish current airport and terminal access arrangements for country air travellers, or for such a decision to adversely impact the ability of any particular operator to access the existing Sydney airport.

The prospect of regional airlines being forced to use the Sydney West Airport or other facilities such as Bankstown, Richmond, Newcastle or Canberra rather than Sydney is not attractive to regional operators and is unacceptable to regional communities in NSW. Even if transport infrastructure were provided, there would still be extra time and cost for country people having to do business in Sydney or transferring to interstate or international flights at the existing Sydney airport.

2.6.3 Regional Airport Infrastructure

LGNSW supports the Transport Plan's proposed Regional Airports Program to increase efficiency, accessibility, competition, commercial viability and sustainability of regional aviation in NSW through landside improvements but this must be matched by funding to support airside infrastructure such as runways, taxiways and security.

The range of issues faced by councils can vary significantly from council to council, depending on the size and range of airport facilities and services used by that airport. For example an airport such as Dubbo which serves in excess of 160,000 passengers per year with multiple operators, faces issues such as security provision and other infrastructure costs related to potential use of jet services or larger turbo-prop aircraft. In contrast, nearby Parkes airport, with only one operator and a passenger level of only 28,000 per year, faces difficulties in funding basic infrastructure costs through a limited ability to apply or increase landing/head fees. Still other councils have even more marginally viable airport facilities, such as Inverell which over the last 10 years or so has been unable to support a sustainable air service, and where council and state government subsidies are required to assist in the provision of air services, and where there is no scope for any scale of cost-recovery to assist in the funding or maintenance of aerodrome facilities.

At airports outside of Sydney, airport owners face significant issues in cost recovery for the use of their facilities. Regional airports are almost exclusively owned and operated by councils. Currently some councils charge fees reflecting the cost of the service provided, while others subsidise the services through their ratepayers, justified on tourism or regional development grounds, or to assist with the retention of their service. Several councils in NSW have attempted to increase landing/head tax fees to pay for necessary runway and infrastructure upgrades, only to have the main airline operator serving that destination threaten to withdraw services and indeed, actively campaign against any attempt to increase fees. A consistent approach to airport charging including the possibility of government subsidies where the taxation burden is shared by the community as a whole may address this imbalance.

Some councils have also noted difficulties associated with security upgrades at regional airports. This is particularly the case where operations are shifting to larger aircraft which require additional security equipment such as X ray machines. While the Commonwealth Government has provided a degree of assistance for the purchase of this equipment, there remains in many cases the significant cost of renovations required in terminal buildings to accommodate these new security arrangements. LGNSW maintains that aviation security is a government responsibility and it should bear all costs associated with these measures.

Case Study - Australian Airports Association Study ^x

In 2016 the Australian Airports Association (AAA) conducted a study on the economic contribution of regional airports and the economic challenges they face in operating and maintaining these airports.

The study found that regional airports play vital roles in local communities, i.e.:

- *Regional airports across Australia invested \$185 million in 2014-15 to maintain and improve operations.*
- *These airports induced another \$83.4 million in spending in the rest of the Australian economy.*
- *Regional airports across Australia employed 1,720 FTEs in 2014-15.*
- *These airports induced the employment of another 2,750 FTEs in the rest of the Australian economy.*

Some of the issues identified in the study include:

- *Many regional airports owners face financial stress from the costs of maintaining, operating and upgrading facilities to meet future aviation needs*
- *On average regional airports had a 6 per cent funding gap in 2014-15 between the expenditure required to operate and subsequent revenue collected from operations.*
- *61 per cent of regional airports had budget deficits in 2014-15.*
- *Expenditures at regional airports are expected to rise by 38 % over the next decade.*
- *Nearly 40 per cent of regional airports expect persistent budget deficits over the next 10 years.*
- *Across Australia's regional airport network, it is expected that the annual budget deficit will be \$17 million per year, equating to a \$170 million shortfall in essential infrastructure and maintenance funding at regional airports over the next 10 years.*

Case Study - Orange Airport (from AAA report)

Located approximately 250 km west of Sydney in the Central Tablelands region of New South Wales, Orange Airport is a major transport hub and a facilitator of a number of key services for the region. The Airport, which is owned and operated by Orange City Council, is primarily used by business travellers such as those involved in the mining, agriculture, health and education sectors. The Airport services a large number of passengers associated with the Orange Health Service, the key hospital for the western NSW region, and the campuses of TAFE and Charles Sturt University.

The Airport is set to be the base for the 24-hour medical rescue helicopter and is also a medical interchange for patients. The Rural Fire Service has an aerial fire fighting base located at the Airport. Around 1,200 RPT services land at the Airport each year, carrying just under 50,000 passengers to Sydney. In addition, the Airport caters for around 8,500 charter and GA flights each year.

The Airport runs at a small deficit which is expected to be maintained into the future. Around 88 per cent of revenue is received from aeronautical operations and around 11 per cent from the lease of land to the approximately 20 tenants located at the Airport. There are a number of charter companies located at the Airport as well as flight training schools, engineering businesses and private owners of hangar space.

The Airport is actively seeking the commencement of larger planes by undertaking significant capital works. A \$19 million upgrade project, including a new \$3 million terminal, was undertaken at the Airport in 2015 in order to cater for the growing number of passengers and to be able to provide screening services once larger aircraft begin operations at the Airport. The Airport has identified 10 projects with a capital cost of around \$5 million that are required to bring the airside and terminal facilities up to a standard necessary to attract larger planes. The priority is the need to reseal the runway as a result of deterioration.

There is no commitment from airline operators to commence landing larger planes. However, without the capital works the Airport will be unable to cater for these planes.

2.7 Road Safety

Local government as the road manager for the 164,000 km local and regional road network, about 90% of the NSW road network by road length, has a direct interest and responsibility for the safety of drivers, passengers, riders and pedestrians using that network.

According to the Draft Road Safety Plan 2012 non-urban country roads, local residential and neighbourhood streets, and intersections where road users mix, account for up to 75% of all deaths and serious injuries on NSW roads. There is particular concern with the increases in crashes in rural and regional areas of NSW. Non-urban country road crashes, many on council managed roads, currently involve 54% of all fatalities (185 lives) in NSW and 23% of serious injuries (1,508 people).

This once again highlights the funding maintenance and upgrade backlog facing local government across the state. The Transport Strategy and road safety plans must address these road safety priorities especially in regional and rural areas, including investment in safety related road infrastructure across the extensive local and regional road network, issues relating

to appropriate speed zones for rural roads, and the prevalence of alcohol related accidents in regional areas.

In May 2017 the NRMA released its Cost of Crashes report analysing the cost of casualties on all NSW roads.^{xi} The report found that over the period 2011-15 the cost of casualties, that is, lives lost and serious, moderate and minor injuries cost the NSW community \$35.7 billion. The report found that in addition to managing the majority of the NSW road network, local council roads continue to have higher fatalities and injuries in comparison to state roads and the motorway and freeway network. It also showed the cost of road trauma on local council roads equates to around \$5.3 billion. The corresponding cost on state roads would be \$1.6 billion, and \$0.2 billion on the motorway and freeway road networks. The cost of not having a proper base to maintain local roads in regional centres will have a negative impact on the safety of local communities, in addition to the continued deterioration of the local road network.

Through our relationship with the Institute of Public works engineering Roads and Transport Directorate, LGNSW has identified road safety actions in the following key areas:

2.7.1 Funding

Both the Australian and NSW governments have increased spending on roads in NSW, other than funding for black spots, safer roads programs, and the local government road safety program, but more assistance is needed from the state government to specifically address road safety outcomes on local roads.

There are fundamental differences in the nature of the local road network that require unique treatments and responses to address road safety issues. The Transport Strategy and Road Safety Plan focuses on strategies that readily apply to the state road network but do not recognise that state roads and local roads have different problems requiring different solutions. Local government faces challenges that limit its ability to achieve safety outcomes. These have to do with these special characteristics endemic to local roads such as:

- Limited resources and access to funding to address a 160,000 km network (compared to 17,000 km state road network);
- A relatively wide geographic spread of accident locations across this network;
- Increasing presence of heavy vehicles impacting physically on infrastructure and on community road safety;
- Delivery and timely flow of information on crash data and road condition data; and
- Increasing demand due to evolving travel patterns.

2.7.2 Improved Data Collection

LGNSW believes that statistics/data should make a greater distinction between local government and state managed roads as this will provide for a more accurate level of reporting and will ultimately guide the flow of road safety related funding and resources.

2.7.3 Collaborative partnerships and engagement

The road safety plan does not fully address the fundamental issue of collaborative partnerships, evidenced by the limited engagement opportunities offered to councils in road safety policy formulation. Road safety is a shared responsibility. Overall, the Plan focusses on what Transport for NSW and RMS will do as opposed to what the road safety practitioners

across all road authorities in the state need to be doing. The adoption of the safe systems model is a sound choice for long term strategy to drive road safety in our community. The Safe System approach to road safety involves a holistic view of the road transport system and the interactions between road infrastructure, roadsides, travel speeds, vehicles and road users. The key element in the approach is the word system – without an integrated approach across all key partners, the approach will have limited utility.

2.7.4 Road Safety Strategic Plans

The State Government can collaborate with local government to develop councils' capability in network safety assessments. These safety assessments coupled with road safety auditing could be supplemented with the implementation of road safety strategic plans as part of each council's existing Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. At present, only a handful of councils have documented local Road Safety Plans. A closer partnership between state and local government can be fostered in this area in order to provide the necessary support and tools to assist local government in developing local road safety strategic plans in consultation with their communities. Funds may be allocated to incentivise councils' engagement in road safety planning and actions, and specifically provide local government with training and resources to identify, plan, and strategically manage road safety outcomes effectively in their respective areas.

2.7.5 Local Government Road Safety Program

The Draft Plan recognises the importance of the Local Government Road Safety Program (LGRSP), however, does not provide specific information on how the government will promote, support reinforce or fund this program, in the long term. The LGRSP ended in June 2017 and the status of the program remains uncertain. The continuation of this Program is significant to local government as it allows for the provision of Road Safety Officers (RSOs) in every council. RSOs do a commendable job working with local communities, engineers, planners and other stakeholders to address road safety issues, especially behavioural related factors. Their continued presence will be instrumental to increasing greater road safety outcomes.

Case study - Eurobodalla Road Safety Plan ^{xii}

The Eurobodalla Shire Council Road Safety Strategic Plan 2013-2017 provides an overall framework to assist Council with its key role and to achieve the road safety vision, and to reduce the severity of road crashes in the Eurobodalla.

The plan identifies council's role in:

- *Assisting our community in understanding the road safety issue at a local level,*
- *Looking after local and regional roads under our control,*
- *Working with other levels of government to address the road safety issue, in particular the NSW Police Force and Roads and Maritime Services, to develop focused education and awareness programs to address local issues,*
- *Lobbying the State and Federal governments for increased funding to address deficiencies and sustainability of the road network; and*
- *Developing local partnerships with industry and business to aid in providing improved road safety outcomes.*

2.8 Connected and automated vehicles technology and electric vehicles

The emerging and transforming technologies associated with connected and automated vehicles have implications for councils as road managers. Local government must be included as government and industry consider the policy, infrastructure and legislative changes that will be required to allow genuine integrated 'door to door' transport solutions. At the recent Australian Local Government Association National Local Roads and Transport Congress in Western Australia in November, delegates discussed the need to more fully explore the implications of technology and intelligent transport on local government and communities and indicated support for council participation in trials of the new technology in local road contexts. LGNSW supports this position and is keen to explore trials in NSW on council roads.

At the same time, the growing availability of electric cars will have considerable impacts on vehicle fleets and usage. In a recent report, *The Future is Electric*, the NRMA stated that there are now more than two million electric vehicles on the road around the world, with suggestions that this could rise to 140 million by 2035.^{xiii} This raises policy implications for councils' planning and road management responsibilities, for example in the provision of electric charging stations in development applications, public car parks, shopping centres and other road-related areas which must be considered as part of the Government's transport and land use planning strategies going forward.

3. CONCLUSION

Local government welcomes the development of the NSW Transport 2056 Strategic Plan and support plans. We recognise all forms of transport as vital components of the state's economy as well as the day to day activities of all people.

The provision of appropriate transport contributes not only to the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of our communities, but also provides essential access to those people in remote locations or in disadvantaged groups. Planning for the massive state-wide transport task presents huge challenges from at both strategic and financial levels, but is necessary to guide all levels of government, including local government, in their future investment, land use and settlement patterns.

Councils are vital partners in the provision of local road transport infrastructure across the state in their share of the significant passenger and freight task, and in providing supporting infrastructure for enhanced public transport services.

Local government is also a key provider of regional aviation infrastructure, and regional communities are vitally concerned with the sustainability of regional air services linking their regional areas with Sydney and other centres.

Road safety remains a major issue for local government particularly in relation to recent increases in fatality and injury crashes on local roads, and requires additional resources and funding from the State Government to arrest and turn these alarming statistics around.

Local government is also vitally interested in the implications of new technology on the future transport task and must be included in future consultation and planning around these issues.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the opportunity to provide the views of Local Government in NSW to the Transport Plan process, and look forward to ongoing consultation through the plan development and implementation process.

If you have any questions about our submission, please contact Richard Connors, Senior Roads and Transport Policy Officer, on 02 9242 4073 or email: richard.connors@lgnsw.org.au.

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