

SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Background

An examination of factors affecting the use, present status and future use of public transport in Tasmania, particularly an integrated version, needs to be set in its context.

The Tasmanian State Government has no overall integrated transport policy and deals with transport issues in a piecemeal fashion even though the Infrastructure Department exists as part of DIER. To give DIER its due the Southern Region Overview Report 2007 provided an excellent and comprehensive survey of that region. It gave a picture of a widely dispersed community outside Hobart with an ageing population and transport disadvantaged sectors within the region. The snapshot provided could be typical of the rest of Tasmania with key urban centres and a hinterland of dispersed rural settlement. As such Tasmania is one of Australia's most regionalised States providing special problems from the provision of healthcare to transport itself.

Historically rail development provided the backbone of both freight and passenger movement until roads were upgraded and highway construction provided the increasing car borne population and the freight operators with improved access.

What had been the chief public transport in both Launceston and Hobart in the form of trams went the way of the dodo and the buses took over. Passenger rail transport ceased in 1975 and the railway became a freight only mode.

In a real sense we are at another crossroads of change. Peak oil has been passed and occasional drop in the price at the pump is just a brief relief in the upward cost of petrol and diesel. The electric vehicle is not yet within the purchasing power of the average battler and biofuels have yet to be used widely. However Tasmania is uniquely set to provide hydroelectric charging once the revolution arrives.

The option of light rail

I would generally support the submissions from the Northern Suburbs Light Rail Group (NSLRG) and Future Transport being a committee member of the first and a member of the second. I endorse the view that the ACIL consultant's report on the northern suburbs light rail was seriously flawed which included the failure to undertake a market survey of potential users but relied on Metro passenger numbers supplied by DIER. The ACIL study also omitted the effect of potential housing development along the line of rail

Both the NSLRG and Future Transport submissions rightly note the lack of public transport in the northern suburbs community.

The Minister for Sustainable Transport has now taken on board representations of the NSLRG regarding the shortcomings of the ACIL Report and agreed to a review of the business case for the light rail proposal.

The light rail proposal which outlines an electric light rail link between Mawson Place and Granton (with an extension to Brighton may become reality if the revised business case establishes it's viability.

There are other existing rail lines which could be the subject of similar studies for passenger light rail potential; for example, Launceston-George Town, Burnie-Devonport. Passenger rail development is considered below,

Buses

DIER has developed the Tasmanian Urban Transport Framework. As part of this DIER is undertaking series Transit Corridor Plans one for Glenorchy to Hobart CBD. The DIER outline of this Plan is proposed as an alternative to the delivery of public transport to the NSLRG proposal. While improvement to the Northern Suburbs services and the Main Road bus route is worth seeking with community input it should be matched with the NSLRG proposal which had the renewed stations on the northern suburbs line

linked to Metro services. In a word integration between Metro and light rail-not conflict.

Any improvement in Metro services statewide has financial implications at a time of Budget constraints. This highlights the issue of transport challenged rural communities without regular bus services. At the Peak Fuel Summit run by Premier David Bartlett in 2006 carpooling was proposed to fill the gap This has had some modest success but needs revisting with Government encouragemrnt.

Passenger Rail

At present Tasmanian Railways has no plans to bring back passenger services to any part of its network. The only passenger usage in recent times has been by preservation groups such as the Derwent Valley and the Don River Railways .In the 60's and 70's some chartering was done by rail enthusiasts along the North West Coast and the former Emu Bay Railway.Both the Derwent Valley and Don River Railways had to suspend their tourism activities under the Pacific National regime which placed heavy insurance costs on them.

If the insurance issue could be resolved as Part III of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)* includes provision for access to rail infrastructure then these organisations and other potential operators could return to running passenger services. Initially these would be in their previous form but demand might be built up by targeting

marketing and working with the accommodation and hospitality industries

There might be potential passenger development, again with tourism linkage, for the North West Coast and Launceston regions.

Ferries

Elsewhere in Australia ferries are an integral part of public transport with Sydney as a classic example.

Whether ferry services would be viable within Tasmania is an open question. If the Hobart area was taken as a possible site for linked ferry services the post 1976 Tasman Bridge response may not be a correct guide. The ferry services developed between Bellerive and Hobart wharf were an emergency response and fell away once the Tasman Bridge was restored

The establishment of the proposed floating jetty to replace ageing infrastructure may refocus the issue of ferry services. MAST refurbished the Opossum Bay jetty at a cost of over \$1m a few years ago and ran an experimental service into Hobart. The passenger numbers were not encouraging and given that Metro were running a reliable service into Hobart at 9am from Opossum Bay that may have been a factor. The Mona Foma ferry is well patronised but like the Peppermint Bay ferry this is a private contractor. The Opossum Bay example also raises the issue of jetty and related

infrastructure cost associated with reviving the ferry option. Kingborough as a future link would require a jetty well in excess of that at Opossum Bay.

A business case is essential for ferry operations and if the proposed floating jetty at the Hobart wharf is completed this could spark a privately funded revival of ferries.

I congratulate the Legislative Council on the formation of the Standing Committee on Integrated Public Transport and appreciate the opportunity given to make a submission I would be prepared to appear before the Committee if required.

I would hope that other areas of transport policy could be reviewed by the Standing Committee in future.

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