



09 September 2019

The Secretary
Legislative Council Select Committee – Greater Hobart Traffic Congestion
Submitted via email to ght@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Secretary

**Metro Tasmania submission to Select Committee on
Greater Hobart Traffic Congestion**

On behalf of Metro Tasmania, thank you for your letter of 19 August inviting us to participate in your inquiry. Metro is positive about the growing focus on congestion in our Hobart network and awareness of public transport as a crucial part of the solution.

As the state's largest passenger transport operator, Metro connects millions of Tasmanians each year, operating a fleet of 219 buses in Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and surrounding areas under contract by the Department of State Growth. Patronage has increased every year since 2012/13 – including an increase of 16% in full-fare paying adult passenger boardings – with around 80% of journeys concentrated in our Hobart network. In 2018/19 alone, Metro's adult patronage grew by nearly 200,000 trips, which would have filled every off-street council carpark in Hobart over 85 times were they made by car.

A wholesale network review implemented in 2016 – Hobart's first in over three decades – incorporated modern transport planning principles, including a trend towards more regular and direct routes, best exemplified by new, extremely successful 'Turn Up and Go' high frequency routes. For example, a new service connecting Shoreline with Hobart City via Rosny at 10 minute weekday intervals attracted a 46% increase in the morning peak, with specific stops on the corridor experiencing growth of up to 113%.

From Metro's perspective, better mobility outcomes in Hobart rely on a reduction in single car occupancy – with every bus capable of taking up to 60 cars off the road, we believe facilitating improved public transport generally, and incentivising commuter oriented services specifically, has enormous potential to reduce congestion and calm Hobart's extremely concentrated morning and afternoon peaks.

Consistent with this view, three core criteria – reliability, flexibility, and cost – which influence mode choice can be manipulated in order to reduce congestion by:



- implementing bus priority measures such as bus or transit lanes, priority traffic lights and adaptive phasing to improve service reliability, making buses an even more compelling alternative to the private car and offering a true commuter incentive;
- increasing service frequency to maximise convenience, minimise wait times, and remove planning barriers to travel; and
- continuing to encourage the use of public transport with fare initiatives while increasing disincentives for private car use via parking fees and congestion charges.

With regard to the road network, the Department of State Growth's 2012 Main Road Transit Corridor Plan proposed measures to improve the flow of buses and reduce travel times on the Main Road – New Town Road – Elizabeth Street corridor. Modelling indicated the measures could reduce travel time between 12% (inbound) and 23% (outbound) in the morning peak, and 8 per cent in both directions in the afternoon peak. Metro has implemented the recommendations within its remit, including the introduction of the high frequency service and bus stop rationalisation to improve spacing and amenity.

Regrettably, Metro understands that local governments have not been as responsive. Due to objections from business owners, proposals to remove parking spaces have been rejected, and proposals including allocating dedicated road space, introducing parking restrictions, and relocating bus stops have not been actioned. The City of Hobart also rejected the Department of State Growth's 2016 Hobart Congestion Traffic Analysis recommendations for Council-owned streets, including extending clearways, changing on-street parking and reconfiguring lanes of Murray Street at Macquarie Street, and Molle Street at the junctions of both Davey and Macquarie Streets.

Indeed, in the entire Greater Hobart area, current bus priority measures are limited to an inwards bus lane on the Southern Outlet between Dynnyrne and Davey Street, and a small bus lane and B-phase traffic light on Main Road Glenorchy southbound at the Elwick Road junction. A detailed list of the key areas and initiatives for bus priority measures Metro has identified is attached to this correspondence.

While business owners are obvious stakeholders in city planning, Metro would argue that prioritising efficient mobility and connectivity is of far greater strategic importance for Hobart, making our centre more dynamic and liveable by creating opportunities, enabling trade, facilitating access to jobs and services, and attracting development and investment. This stands in stark contrast to the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics estimate that the avoidable cost of congestion in Hobart was \$90m in 2015, predicted to rise to \$160m by 2030.

With a view to travel demand, Metro recognises the absence of a high school in the CBD increases dependency on decentralised secondary education providers like Taroon High School, a school community which generated over 76,000 boardings



on dedicated services alone in 2018/19 (an average of 400/day). The overwhelming majority of students live outside walking distance of their schools, creating additional network load and challenging capacity during school term.

The considerable differences in the performance of the traffic network between school terms and vacation periods demonstrates the impact student movements can have, with parental school 'drop-offs' representing a substantial source of congestion. Other contributing factors include relatively short travel times from outer suburbs, allowing people to depart home later in the morning when compared to other Australian cities, and a centralised destination (Hobart CBD) for the majority of public and private journeys.

Metro is a data-rich business, and this intelligence identifies traffic congestion as the single biggest influence on service reliability, with disruption in the road network fundamentally challenging our ability to deliver services in line with timetables and customer expectations. While historically congestion was event-based and sporadic, Metro would suggest disruption is increasingly systemic, and now represents the impetus for 55% of all adverse customer feedback Metro receives.

In addition to the congestion-prone areas commonly identified by motorists, there are a number of key locations central to Metro's operations where disruption can have a 'multiplier' effect. Chief among these is the 'hub' of Metro's network, extending from the Collins Street contra lane into the Elizabeth Street interchange, and the intersection of Elizabeth and Macquarie Streets, a space in which Metro facilitates up to 17,200 journeys per day. Congestion in this location has been exacerbated by construction of the Hyatt Centric hotel over the period from December 2016, changes to urban fringe and regional services in January 2019 which increased vehicle volumes, and the ongoing requirement for buses turning onto Macquarie Street to give-way to pedestrians during a green light.

Metro believes a city which made better use of its public transport could reap important community benefits – numerous studies have shown public transport promotes social interaction, increases community engagement, creates safer, more pedestrian friendly streets, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Private vehicles cause congestion and undermine the social advantages of active transport and associated physical activity. In addition to being a major protective factor against obesity, type two diabetes, and heart disease, increasing awareness of other health and environmental impacts resulting from the dominance of private vehicles highlights public transport as a compelling alternative:

- buses have a smaller carbon footprint, producing around 6 to 8 times less CO₂;
- public transport uses finite resources, including road space, more efficiently, moving over 15 times more people in one lane;
- every million kilometres travelled by bus saves 45,000 litres of fuel; and



- transport accounts for around a quarter of global emissions - if 10% of Australian car drivers took the bus instead, greenhouse gases would be reduced by 400,000 tonnes/year.

From a commercial perspective, public transport can increase property prices, with values for properties near good transport links typically demonstrating stronger growth than comparable properties without, and offers a sizeable benefit to the family budget. According to the Australian Automobile Association's March 2019 Transport Affordability Index, the average Hobart household average spends an average of \$271.81 a week (over \$14,000 annually) to own and maintain two private cars, and leads the nation in petrol costs, with an average weekly petrol spend of \$74.27 incorporated in the total.

In conclusion, Metro believes public transport is a critical element in reducing congestion and securing sustainable development outcomes for Hobart – we submit the following recommendations to better facilitate its success:

- implement recommendations from the Department of State Growth's Main Road Transit Corridor Plan and the Hobart Congestion Traffic Analysis;
- foster investment in other bus priority measures as identified in the attached;
- build the case – particularly among business owners – of the strong economic benefits of prioritising connectivity and exchange;
- improve efficiency of Greater Hobart student movement through examination of the location and availability of schools and childcare facilities; and
- adopt and encourage uptake of flexible working arrangements in CBD based local and state government offices to manage peak time travel demand.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Tim Gardner", written over a white background.

Tim Gardner
Chair

Attachment: Key Areas and Initiatives for Bus Priority Measures



ATTACHMENT: KEY AREAS AND INITIATIVES FOR BUS PRIORITY MEASURES

Prioritised recommendations

1. Extend the bus lane from the Southern Outlet down the left lane of Macquarie Street
2. Prioritise bus movements on Collins Street and exiting Elizabeth Street on to Macquarie Street (entrance to the interchange contra lane is impacted by cars queueing for Argyle Street car park; exit from the interchange is impacted by short traffic signal sequence)
3. Convert 'storage lanes' to bus lanes at each intersection on Brooker Highway from Goodwood Road to Risdon Road
4. Allow buses a five to ten second head start at intersections on Main Road, Brooker Highway, Macquarie Street and Davey Street
5. Implement bus priority lanes or tidal clearways
 - a. on Main Road between Springfield Avenue
 - b. from Shoreline to Mornington roundabout and on Tasman Highway
 - c. from Mornington roundabout to Rosny Hill
 - d. on Davey Street from Murray Street to the Southern Outlet
 - e. on Main Road from Marys Hope Road to Glenorchy interchange
 - f. on Rosny Hill Road from Bligh Street to Tasman Bridge

Additional strategies

Address synchronicity of traffic signals in CBD – particularly Macquarie Street, Davey Street, and Sandy Bay Road into Harrington Street

Separate pedestrian and vehicle movements at intersections – i.e. all pedestrian movements followed by vehicle movements