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Government inquiry into - Options for an Integrated Sustainable Public Transport system in Southern Tasmania.

We submit the following for the Legislative Council to consider while working on its inquiry. Climate Action Hobart is pleased to see the Government considering an integrated, sustainable, public transport system for southern Tasmania.

The expanding footprint of housing and industrial communities/suburbs places strain on physical communication networks – roads, walkways, bus services. The subject of public transport meshes with regional and local planning in general. It exists to allow people to get about, *always in conjunction with walking*.

We are very concerned that earlier southern Tasmania transport studies appear to be very road-oriented. There may be an unintentional bias in favour of private and commercial road transport above other modes. There is no doubt that Tasmanians subsidise these transports directly and indirectly to leave walking, cycling, buses, rail, ferries and even shipping as poor last preferences.

We would like you to consider the following in your inquiry.

Reducing the need to travel (so reducing environmental impacts, especially carbon footprint, of travel)

The ever expanding network of arterial roads, that soon become clogged; the allowance of suburban sprawl into lands distant from metropolitan areas, that encourage ever more use of private motor vehicles for commuting to and from work; are totally unsustainable, and need to stop. Previous transport and development plans appear to have given this need unfairly low priority.

Suggested action: We would like to see robust long term planning for southern Tasmanian housing and industrial development.

Walking

Until about 70 years ago, nearly everybody walked or took public transport. Our continuing preference for the joys of motor transport are increasingly taking opportunities for walking and cycling to a minimum.

Current suburban pedestrian opportunities in some areas are not good for people with prams, mobility scooters, walking sticks etc. Sloping, narrow pavements, often on only one side of the road, and sometimes with posts in the middle, make pedestrian travel difficult. Outside the suburbs there are sometimes no opportunities for walking alongside roads except on the uneven shoulder close to speeding traffic. People must be able to walk from their homes to their nearest public transport. That transport must allow, at least part of the day, for prams, wheelchairs, mobility

scooters etc.

Suggested action: We would like to see wide footpaths, possibly shared paths, in future housing estates to allow safe passage for pedestrians, the elderly or disabled, and cyclists.

Wheelchairs /mobility scooters

There are new users emerging who are not catered for in any transport planning. Those with wheelchairs, mobility scooters cannot get about except with difficulty. Some of these people are quite able, apart from their inability to walk, but they are even prevented from crossing the Tasman Bridge – physically because the footpaths are too narrow, and legally because signage at the bridge ends disallows them on the roadway. The public transport system needs to provide for these people.

Suggested action: these items should be allowed on ferries, buses. In the longer term, the Tasman Bridge needs remodelling to allow for shared footways.

Cycling

Narrow roads along with driver inattention or hostility make cycling difficult for many.

Bicycles are not allowed to be motorised beyond a certain horsepower (5hp?). Power-assisted bicycles are invaluable on our hilly suburban streets

Suggested action: Legalise power-assisted bicycles to higher horsepower.

Bicycle networks need to be retained, expanded, and made part of suburban planning.

Bicycles need to be able to be carried on buses and ferries

Rail freight

Rail freight is sadly underutilised in Tasmania at present, in favour of roads. Rail transport fulfils a social need, reduces traffic and can contribute to the reduction of unnecessary road deaths in Tasmania. The corridor to Port of Hobart must be retained, even if its use lapses briefly while we transition to 21st century rail freight infrastructure. Rail freight has a far smaller environmental and carbon footprint than road freight. It is definitely sustainable when not competing unfairly with highly subsidised road networks.

Suggested action: We would like to see robust long term planning for Tasmanian rail.

Ferries

The water taxi service from Bellerive should continue and be encouraged.

Fast ferry transport from beyond bottlenecks such as Southern Outlet, Bridgewater Bridge/Brooker Highway and Tasman Bridge would be an advantage at busy times, and must carry bicycles, wheelchairs, scooters etc to link with inner Hobart bike paths. Walkways/shared footways to the jetties, as well as networking with bus routes is necessary. Car parking is necessary at the more distant transport hubs. Ferries use a large amount of fuel, so a transition to natural gas, then to biofuels is necessary.

Suggested action: development of carbon neutral ferry services with pedestrian and bus transport to the jetties.

Buses

Already Metro has done considerable work on the bus networks recently, and this should continue. Hobart City Council employed an expert on transport not long ago, Jan Gehl. His recommendations should be applied as appropriate to the other southern Council areas. These included ideas such as priority road use for buses. The use of the single rail corridor from Port of Hobart to Brighton could be used as a dedicated bus lane during peak hours. The single ticketing system introduced recently by Metro is a great improvement. Country buses at present operate entirely independently from Metro. The transition from suburban to Redline, for example, is difficult physically – the need to walk several blocks carrying a suitcase. Bus use needs to be flexible and passenger oriented. Also, Redline has an extremely out-of-date booking system. It has been compared with the purchase of an

overseas airline ticket. For example, if a Redline bus has just left Hobart you cannot catch it at Bridgewater unless you booked well before it left.

Suggested action: Continue to view bus transport as the most versatile available, with access to small communities and hilly terrains. Ensure optimal networking.

Ticketing

One ticket to take you for your entire journey, or entire day's travel wherever the public transport runs is ideal.

Carbon Cost of public transport.

A transition to clean energy sources for all transport is necessary as soon as possible. Electric transport requires a clean electricity source. At present Tasmania does not produce enough carbon-free electricity for its current needs, let alone growing needs. Also biofuels are not produced in enough volume for heavier public transport.

Here are some more important actions

The Tasmanian Government must commit to a radical overhaul and major investment in public transport across the State, with the ultimate aim of reducing the demand for travel and achieving emissions-free transport. Key elements would include:

- ⤴ a major investment in safe walking and cycling infrastructure connecting key dormitory suburbs with urban and employment centres;
- ⤴ a major investment in a low-emission bus fleet and related infrastructure (bus shelters, bus lanes, etc).
- ⤴ totally new 21st century electric rail services in the state, encompassing both freight and, where viable, rapid passenger transit services. As with the bus system, and in recognition of their environmental and public benefits, rail services must be rapid, reliable and affordably priced to encourage usage;
- ⤴ a concerted strategy to discourage private car use for commuting, involving encouragement for car-pooling, higher parking fees, financial incentives for workers and employers that promote public transport, and an expansion of bus and cycling lanes;
- ⤴ the State Government should work with the transport industries to encourage a rapid and progressive move away from fossil fuels to renewable electricity or (at a limited scale) genuinely sustainable biofuels and lower-carbon fuels (such as natural gas) where necessary (for example in heavy vehicles).
- ⤴ Generation of additional clean energy is needed as part of this transition.

McJannet

for

Climate Action Hobart