Circular Economy Huon – submission September 2022

Southern Outlet Transit Lane– Public Works Committee

Building a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet (SO) will exacerbate the problem of traffic congestion in Hobart, not solve it. The main way to alleviate congestion in Hobart is to reduce the number of individual vehicles entering the city, particularly in the morning between 7.00am and 9.00am. Building an additional traffic lane into Hobart on the SO will encourage more people to drive.

The solution to congestion and improving mobility is to investigate and then implement measures to increase the use of public transport, car-pooling, community transport and active transport. Much of this work has already been documented (but not implemented) in the joint Southern Tasmania Councils Authority and Tasmanian Government, *Southern Integrated Transport Plan 2010*. It is recommended that the core elements of the Plan are revisited so that realistic and longer lasting solutions to traffic congestion are adopted that will also improve mobility for the community south of Hobart.

The disappointing aspect of persisting with plans to build a fifth lane on the SO is that it is passing over the opportunity to make a clear statement about mobility in Tasmania for the future. Following the positive introduction of ferries on the Derwent to reduce vehicle movements on the Tasman Bridge, a comprehensive strategic approach could still be taken to reduce the number of vehicles traveling into and out of Hobart via the SO. By adopting such strategies, it can bring about real behavioral change leading to residents south of Hobart being less reliant on private cars and reduce the ongoing need for extremely expensive road building projects. This would be consistent with taking a longer term perspective and putting measures in place for a carbon-constrained and resources efficient future. Account needs to be taken of the *30-Year Greater Hobart Plan* being developed by Kingborough Council, Clarence, Glenorchy and Hobart City Councils, and the Tasmanian Government .

1. **Does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs, or solve a recognised problem?**

There is a need to reduce congestion but a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet is not the solution. It is well accepted that building more roads increases traffic. See – Patrick Sissons, (2020) *Expanding highways and building more roads actually makes traffic worse*.

Table 1 below presents information about lane use on the Southern Outlet on an hourly basis for Friday 26th June, 2021.

Table 1. Vehicle movements – Southern Outlet
Data for Friday 26th June, 2021 – Station A0171100 – 435m South of Davey Street
Source: Geocounts.com

Date June 26/time am	South- left	South - right	South Total	North - Right	North – left	Total North
2-3	28	7	35	1	24	25
3-4	30	5	35	6	23	29
4-5	63	10	73	24	88	112
5-6	177	59	236	91	261	352
6-7	366	209	575	472	711	1183
7-8	538	491	1029	1146	1304	2450
8-9	651	573	1224	908	1057	1965
9-10	662	499	1161	651	932	1583
10-11	667	469	1136	527	907	1434
11-12	714	525	1239	564	921	1382
12-13	739	606	1304	494	888	1382
13-14	773	693	1466	555	888	1443
14-15	899	869	1768	554	883	1437
15-16	921	1105	2026	624	966	1590
16-17	1040	1400	2440	584	917	1501
17-18	1033	1378	2411	511	840	1351
18-19	690	550	1240	316	600	916
19-20	474	299	773	139	417	556

Table 2 below presents information for the peak periods on the following week

Table 2. Vehicle movements – Southern Outlet
Data for Wednesday 30th June, 2021 – Station A0171100 – 435m South of Davey Street

Time	South - left	South - right	South Total	North - right	North - left	North Total
6-7	369	234	603	542	735	1277
7-8	586	559	1145	1175	1309	2484
8-9	655	574	1229	1005	999	2004
9-10	661	444	1105	688	900	1588
10-11	693	420	1113	520	919	1439
15-16	902	1031	1933	593	889	1482
16-17	1001	1481	2482	653	1081	1734
17-18	1043	1416	2459	519	856	1375
18-19	693	630	1323	275	528	803

Both Table 1 and Table 2 show that the peak times for traffic heading into the city is between 7am and 10.00am and the peak times leaving the city are between 3.00pm and 6.00pm. It is well accepted that there is considerable congestion with traffic banking up on the SO heading into the city at peak periods in the morning but this does not occur in the afternoon when a similar volume of traffic is heading south. The blockage occurs in the city, on both Macquarie and Davey Streets and elsewhere in the centre of Hobart. Increasing the potential flow of traffic by adding an extra lane on the SO will only make this worse.

The identified problem of traffic congestion travelling north into the city in the morning is not solved by building a fifth lane on the SO.

2. **Are the proposed works the best solution to meet identified needs or solve a recognised problem within the allocated budget?**

The proposed work of adding a fifth lane to the SO is not the best solution to solve traffic congestion, in fact it will make it worse. Whereas there are other elements of the Hobart City Deal that would be cheaper, quicker and easier to implement but where there has been little or no progress.

Why is the work to increase traffic flows on Macquarie and Davey Street not already actioned? Congestion has been a problem since well before the signing of the Hobart City Deal in 2019 but there would seem to be a lack of motivation to progress this component of the Plan.

Likewise, another element of the Deal is to develop the Hobart interchange but even the site for this is still not known. An interchange will make it easier for people traveling by bus into the city to then catch another bus for an onward journey. There was also mention of a Kingston interchange and there has been no movement on this facility.

There are other elements of the Hobart City Deal where there has been some progress. This includes, increasing public transport services to Kingborough and the Huon, and developing park and ride facilities in Kingston. The figures for patronage stemming from the new bus services are not publicly available but it is expected that a more frequent and express service will be attractive to some commuters. However there seems to be limited thinking about making public transport truly accessible for people. Where are the local commuter buses to link people to public transport trunk routes? How do people park and ride from Gordon, Woodbridge, Snug, Margate, Dover, Mountain River, Sandfly etc? The inadequacy of public transport infrastructure in the Huon Valley is woeful. There are 65 bus stops ‘designated’ by the Department of State Growth, many of which are without even a stop sign; or hard standing, or a shelter and seating and lighting…..

Work is well underway with the development of park and ride facilities in Kingston but these are totally inadequate to cater for current and future populations. When completed Huntingfield will have around 180 parking spots and bike storage for 23 bikes. Firthside will have 50 parking spots and space for 26 bikes. These facilities, with low occupancy vehicles using the spaces, will cater for around 276 people to park and ride buses from Kingston. It

should be noted that these are not all extra spaces as both areas have been used as car parks for many years. The number of car and bike spaces is seriously inadequate to cater to the numbers of people needing to commute from Kingston to Hobart or justify the construction costs of an additional lane on the SO. Unfortunately the park and ride facilities in Kingston are another example of the result of a lack of long term strategic transport planning and implementation in Tasmania over the last ten years.

3. **Are the proposed works fit for purpose?**

No. The proposed works will do the opposite of what is intended! It will increase congestion in the city of Hobart at peak times in the morning. Additionally, during peak travel times in the afternoon there will be greater log jams of traffic across the city.

Other jurisdictions around the world are implementing creative solutions to reduce traffic flows and increase mobility. Below are a number of examples:

- **Ride-share**
  Successful schemes to encourage carpooling have been operated at a range of facilities including universities and business. In Sydney, Woolworths consortium had inadequate parking spaces for their 6,500 staff but through offering incentives to staff, employees were encouraged to ride together. They provided free carparking for 56 car-pooling vehicles which resulted in 6,607 cars being taken off the road in the first three months and an overall reduction in emissions of 10%.

  Schemes like the Woolworths example don't just happen. They need to be professionally set up by technology mobility professionals. Properly investigated and properly established ride-share arrangements could be set up in southern Tasmania.

- **Commuter services**
  Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation is using smaller, community based micro transit services to provide access to the main trunk route mobility services. There are many communities south of Hobart that are several kilometres from main line bus services and need a car to leave their residence. Due to the shortage of appropriate parking at many bus stops people travel all the way to Hobart by private car. A small scale commuter service would convey people to larger busses.

- **On-demand public transport**
  Many localities in countries includingGermany, Wales, England, Japan, the USA and Australia have in the last few years launched app-based services that allow people to book a shuttle minibus from "floating bus stops" near their homes and go directly to their destinations. There are now over 450 such schemes worldwide. This would be a valuable way of improving mobility in Kingborough and the Huon Valley through Area Connect working with transport technology companies like Liftango or Padam.

- **Free fares/reduced fares**
  The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority is providing free fares for a year starting in July 2022 and will study the impact on passenger numbers and mobility. Greater

Manchester is capping bus fares to provide a 50 per cent reduction which is being supported by a national contribution from the UK Government. Free fares were introduced in Tasmania earlier in 2022 but there is yet no report publicly available detailing the cost, numbers travelling or benefits of continuing this in the future. Tasmania could look for fare assistance rebate support from the Federal Government instead of money for road building.

- **Employee modal transport shift**
  Dublin Bus has launched a twelve month trial scheme in June 2022 to provide employees with e-bikes to get from home to bus depots for work. Potentially this has many advantages for employees in terms of costs, health, noise and less vehicles roads.

  Similar trial schemes could be tried with employees in Hobart starting with larger organisations like Hobart City Council, Government Departments and UTAS. Additionally thought needs to be put into incentivising employees by giving them a free Greencard for bus travel instead of home garaging business and government vehicles.

4. Do the proposed works provide value for money?

Like most major projects there isn't a definitive figure for the cost of building a 5th lane. Section 8.3, p.65 of the Pitt and Sherry "*Hobart City Deal Southern Projects, Sub-project 1:Southern Outlet Transit Lane, Concept Design Report"* puts a figure of $40million for the total cost of the project. However in a number of places in that report it states that further work is required on various aspects of the plan which could result in higher costs. It is also unclear what costs have or have not been included in the $40million. For example, does this figure include compensation to house owners that would have to be demolished for building the roadway? Or compensation for gardens etc that would be taken from residences? It is also important to remember that the report is 2 years old and construction costs have risen.

It would not be unreasonable to find that the total cost of the project is now well over $60million. But this is not going to improve traffic flows at peak times to and through Hobart. According to p.25 of the *Hobart City Deal* publication, (2019) the overall measurement of success about congestion will be:

> *….congestion will have been reduced through targeted capital investment and smart technology solutions, and the percentage of journeys to work that are made by car will be reduced.*

It is now most unlikely that this measure of success will be achieved. Therefore, the proposed works do not represent value for money.

5. **Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?**

No. As indicated in the previous four answers, the concept of adding a fifth lane to the SO is flawed and there are many better ways in which this money could be spent. The starting point would be to go back to the joint Southern Tasmania Councils Authority and Tasmanian Government, *Southern Integrated Transport Plan 2010* and map out an implementation strategy.

To adequately appraise the efficacy of spending a large amount of money on building a fifth lane when there are so many more applicable and longer term solutions available it is strongly recommended that it should be referred to the **Tasmanian Audit Office** for their consideration before any further money is spent on the project. They are an unbiased arbiter that can decide if this project is a good use of public funds.

6. **Conclusion**

To conclude it is appropriate to quote directly from the last section of the report from Smarter Cambridge Transport, (December 2016), *Reducing Traffic Congestion and Pollution in Urban Areas*:

The name of the game is 'modal shift'. Long-term reductions in congestion require people to switch to more sustainable, space-efficient modes of transport: walking, cycling, buses, trams and trains. Though some relief may be gained from increasing the efficiency and capacity of the road network, this will always be short-term: the iron law of induced demand will see to that. People will simply adapt to prevailing road conditions, choosing whichever route is quickest, and increasing driving distances as road speeds increase.

To achieve modal shift in towns and cities we need to invest in improving sustainable transport modes and, at the same time, reduce capacity, access and convenience of urban road networks for motor vehicles. This requires a revolution in transport planning: no longer can the motor vehicle be king of the city. We must design urban roads and streets to be attractive and convenient places to walk, cycle and use public transport. Where compromise is necessary, because of lack of space or safety concerns, it is motor vehicles that must give way: diverted away from sensitive streets or slowed down.

For this not to be portrayed as a "war on motorists", we must find ways to filter motor vehicles so as to deter people from driving who have alternatives, but without severely inconveniencing those who, for personal or business reasons, have no alternative. Transport professionals must adjust the way they refer to people, not as 'motorists' or 'cyclists', but as people who drive, cycle, walk, take a bus, etc. Change is not a zero-sum game: someone's gain is not necessarily someone else's loss: we all stand to gain from having more travel options.

Government and local authorities need to invest in developing and articulating a positive vision of what low-car cities will look like. It is essential that they involve urban and

landscape designers from the outset, and not bring them in at the end of engineering-led schemes merely to 'add lipstick'.

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