



Circular Economy Huon

Submission for the Legislative Council Select Committee Greater Hobart Traffic Congestion

Proposal

This submission proposes that a community based carpool scheme, (also referred to as rideshare) will contribute a cost effective, equitable, environmentally positive and timely strategy to reduce congestion in greater Hobart. It is recommended that initially a carpooling pilot project is established for the Huon Valley and Kingborough municipalities.

This submission outlines mobility issues in the Huon Valley, the advantages of adopting carpooling, reference to other schemes and suggestions about how it can be successfully implemented.

1. Circular Economy Huon

Circular Economy Huon (CEH) is a community group in the Huon Valley that focuses on developing regenerative systems that are compatible with a healthy planet through working with business, government and any other organisation. We want to reduce wastage during production and consumption; particularly green house gas emissions (GHG), to improve and make living standards more equitable. The principles of the circular economy can provide short-term cost benefits today and some striking longer-term strategic opportunities. The principle of the circular economy applies to all spheres of activity including transport and the resulting congestion caused by inefficient systems.

2. Congestion

Traffic congestion can be seen as a worldwide issue. The demand for cars increased during the 1990s and is now at around an annual figure of 80 million vehicles since 2017¹. This trend is mirrored in Tasmania. In 2014 there were 442, 575 registered vehicles in Tasmania and by 2019 this had increased by over 50,000 to 493,358². A greater proportion of this increase would have been in southern Tasmania. Likewise the number of licensed drivers in Tasmania had increased from 368,562 in 2014 to 387,147³ in 2019. And the total kilometres travelled on roads in Tasmania has risen from 4,975 million in 2010 to 5,733 million in 2018.⁴ Therefore the picture in Tasmania is that over the last ten years there are more vehicles on the road, more drivers for those vehicles and the distance travelled on Tasmania's roads has also gone up by around 15.

For some people the solution to congestion is to increase road space but the case of Katy Freeway in Houston Texas illustrates this seldom deals with the problem. This is the widest highway in North America with 26 lanes completed in 2011 and by 2014 they were looking at increased travel times as many more people used the highway⁵.

3. Huon Valley residents add to congestion in Hobart

People from the Huon Valley travel in and out of Hobart, through the Kingborough municipal area, for employment, sports, health, social outings and family reasons etc.. Out of total population of 17,200⁶ people in the Huon Valley, car ownership sits at around 1.1 cars per adult. Of the working population around 70% of people commute by car and only around 1% by bus⁷. Of course not all Huon Valley residents work in Hobart, some work in the Valley and others travel to Kingborough. Figures show that the average distance for commuting is 24km per day.

One of the important implications of the data is that comparatively few people are using public transport. Within other areas of greater Hobart around 5%⁸ of people use public transport for travelling to work. This indicates that residents of the Huon Valley contribute to congestion in Hobart by the usage of low occupancy private vehicles.

4. Mobility problems in the Huon Valley

Transport is often identified as a problem for the residents of the Huon Valley. It is important to recognise mobility issues in the Huon Valley so that the solutions for congestion in Hobart are not disproportionately adversely impacting on Huon residents. The Huon Valley Transport Access Survey 2018⁹ found that expense, lack of door to door transport, and poor public transport services were factors that restricted mobility for 57% of residents.

The median income in the Huon Valley is \$38,701 whereas the average for the whole of Australia is \$47,692¹⁰. The average cost of owning a car in the Huon Valley is \$8,000¹¹ a year. The costs of travelling on TassieLink services to Hobart are \$10.40 from Huonville, \$11 from Cygnet, \$13.70 from Geeveston and \$21¹² from Dover. The return journey is double the cost. So that for residents who live in an area that in general is less affluent than elsewhere in Australia and spends \$8,000 a year on keeping a car, it is unlikely that they are able to afford to travel regularly by public transport.

5. Solutions to congestion in Hobart, and mobility in the Huon Valley

There need to be more high occupancy vehicles from the Huon Valley travelling in and out of Hobart. This could be by reimagining public transport, revising park and ride arrangements, introducing community transport or, by following our preferred option - developing a carpooling scheme.

An improved bus service can be part of the solution coupled with a park and ride arrangements. This would require a review of scheduling, an increase in services and a reduction in ticket prices to make services more attractive. Land would need to be set aside and prepared for improving park and ride arrangements. These changes could be implemented and would be supported by Circular Economy Huon but they would need an initial injection of potentially considerable funds and ongoing subsidies. It is suggested that a similar picture would emerge for improving community based transport.

There is support for greater active transport options in the Huon Valley, including cycling, walking and water based transport. However these would make little if any impact on congestion levels in Hobart.

6. Preferred solution – Carpooling

Carpooling is where more than one person shares a journey in a private car. This is sometimes organised by friends or work colleagues on an informal basis. A carpooling scheme takes this arrangement to the next level through an online platform. Like the informal system it may result in work colleagues or

friends travelling together but it also provides the opportunity for matching up people who prior to joining a scheme didn't know each other. While in some senses this can sound a bit scary, or even risky, there are a number of schemes operating around the world that have developed standardised operating procedures that could be followed in Tasmania. These schemes have been running for many years. Below are examples of two operating schemes, one in the UK and one in Australia:

- **Liftshare UK** - has 600,000 members, has been operating for 20 years. They calculate that they have taken over 800 million miles of car travel off UK roads and have developed business partnerships with many corporates including Heathrow Airport¹³
- **Northern Rivers Carpool** - has operated for 10 years with 3,000 members and was supported by government. It started in northern NSW but has spread out to establish schemes in western Sydney and western Melbourne¹⁴

(Mention needs to be made of Coolpool Tasmania that was a carpooling scheme for a number of years. It operated prior to the introduction of mobile technology, lacked community and financial support and was probably ahead of its time for Tasmania. There are findings from the Coolpool initiative that should be used to improve the outcome for a more comprehensive carpooling project in the future. The founder of Coolpool Tasmania is happy to provide advice based on past experience for the introduction of a new carpooling scheme.)

Advantages of car pooling

There are many advantages that come from introducing a carpooling scheme:

- Congestion is reduced – Heathrow partnership with Liftshare has saved 60 million road miles.
- Reduced cost of road infrastructure – both capital and maintenance that can amount to hundreds of millions of dollars.
- Cost of making new car parking facilities is reduced - \$10,000 per park.
- Equitable access – for people who don't or can't drive.
- Social connectedness– more resilient community- people know their neighbours.
- Health benefits from having social interactions.
- Environmental benefits – Liftshare UK estimate they have saved over 150,00 tonnes of CO2.

Collaboration, governance and structure

It is suggested that a car pooling scheme in southern Tasmania should be a collaborative initiative of local government, the RACT, state government, business, regional government agencies and community. Due to the broad range of agencies participating there needs to be a clear governance and operational structure and line of command. A representative governance group should be drawn from participating organisations. The governance group would elect or appoint a chair who would be the conduit to the project manager. The project manager would be appointed by the governance group. Each participating agency could be part of a broad reference group that would probably meet twice a year to stay in touch with the initiative. Good communications will be vital at all levels of the scheme.

Other car pooling schemes have found that it is beneficial to work within organisations to build the take up of car pooling arrangements. For example, in the area for the pilot scheme this could be with the Education Department, Huon Aquaculture or local government offices.

An integral part of establishing the proposed pilot program is to set up a robust evaluation system through involvement of the University of Tasmania.

Measures that will improve the take up of ride share

There are a number of measures that can be taken to improve the take up of carpooling both for car drivers and passengers. These include:

- access to 'high occupancy vehicle' lanes, similar to bust lanes now, to allow for speedier access into the city;
- parking concessions that could include no cost, reduced cost, and extended stay for parking to registered car pool vehicles;
- the state government offering reduced vehicle registration charges;
- guarantees for passengers return trip if the ride share vehicle driver is unavoidably delayed;
- a public information campaign using incentives to encourage, e.g 'Save 50% on commute costs - take a friend'

7. Transitioning to electric vehicles for ride sharing

The concern that Circular Economy Huon has about vehicle emissions has been mentioned in section 1 above. Below, Table 1. shows the fuel used by passenger vehicles in Tasmania and the resulting CO².

Table 1. Emissions from passenger vehicles in Tasmania to year ending June 30th 2018¹⁵

Fuel	Megalitres	Co2 per Kg/Litre	Total CO2 - tons
Petrol	379	2.31	875,490
Diesel	48	2.68	128,640
LPG	1	1.51	1,510
Total	428	-	1,005,640

With emission from passenger vehicles alone producing more than 1 million tons of CO² in the 2017/18 financial year considerably more action needs to be taken on reducing emissions. While carpooling will assist with bringing down emissions, a greater emphasis needs to be given to switching to electric vehicles (EVs). It follows that if residents can save money by adopting carpooling practices they are more likely to be able to save to buy an EV. And then more EVs can be used for carpooling.

(The number of EVs in the state is low with only 5 vehicles registered in the Huon Valley in 2017. It is incongruous that Tasmania has the second lowest number of EV sales per 10,000 vehicles sold between 2011 – 2018¹⁶ in Australia with the exception of the Northern Territory; although Tasmania produces around 90% green power.)

With the aim of hastening the take up of EVs in Tasmania, CEH is organising a seminar for tourism operators in southern Tasmania with practical information and costings for installing recharge stations at their business. This event will take place at Willy Smiths Apple Shed on November 19th.

In addition to this event, CEH is investigating how a bulk buy of EVs can be organised to reduce the initial cost of vehicles. There is also the possibility of groups of people getting together to buy one EV to share. It is expected that more specific details will emerge on this over the next few months.

8. Ongoing discussions about car pooling

CEH has been in discussion with the RACT and the Huon Valley Council about carpooling. In the Greater Hobart Mobility Vision, RACT suggested that ride share would improve mobility in both the 1-5 years and

6-10 year plans. Another meeting about carpooling is scheduled with the RACT and the Huon Valley Council in November of this year.

We are also working collaboratively with Westwinds Community Centre as they are currently investigating the demand for carpooling in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel region.

9. The next step

Ride share is a relatively quick and inexpensive method to positively impact congestion in Hobart. But it still needs to be properly researched, resourced and funded. There needs to be full investigation of similar programs operating elsewhere to ascertain how this should be established and operated. It is anticipated that a carpooling scheme could be operational within six months once consensus is reached to proceed.

Circular Economy Huon would welcome the opportunity to talk further with the Select Committee to further explain this proposal and recommend specialists who will be able to assist with getting this initiative underway.

References

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