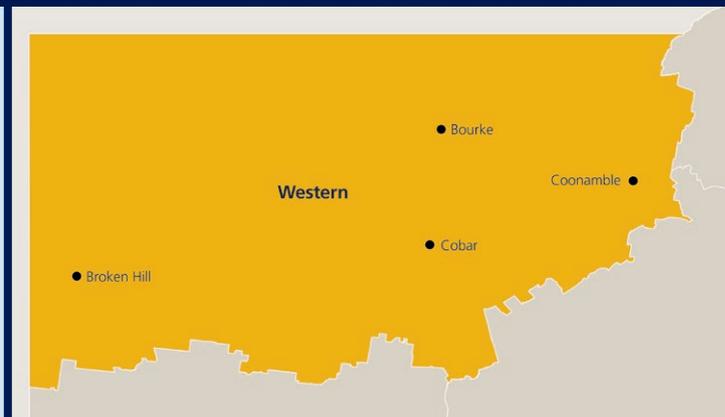


WESTERN

Regional Transport Plan

December 2013



Western Regional Transport Plan

December 2013

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Transport for NSW, 2013.

Transport for NSW

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MINISTERS' MESSAGE

When we came to government, one of our first priorities was to develop a clear direction for transport in NSW over the next 20 years.

The *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* was released in December 2012 to provide a comprehensive blueprint for the future, complete with more than 220 short, medium and long term actions.



To support the Master Plan, we recognise that the state's 14 key regional centres have more specific local transport needs and priorities which should be considered and planned for.

The *Western Regional Transport Plan* outlines specific actions to address the unique challenges of the area and includes the things you told us were important to you during consultation in 2012.

The plan looks at the importance of planning for the future in the Western region taking into account an ageing population and the vast distances travelled by those who live in the region to access services and facilities.

With driving the primary mode of transport in the region, the plan prioritises road maintenance and includes support for a heavy vehicle haulage bypass at Broken Hill to carry freight from the mining and agricultural industries. The plan ensures Western region residents will have better connections to jobs, study and town centres - now and into the future.

In the longer term we will focus on ensuring suitable travel options exist, whether by air, rail or bus for the community and also ensuring adequate community transport services are provided.

Thank you to the community who took the time to contribute to this planning process. We look forward to working with you as we continue to improve and develop our state's transport system.

Gladys Berejiklian

Minister for Transport

Duncan Gay

Minister for Roads and Ports



YOUR REGION

The Western region is the largest in NSW, covering over 300,000 square kilometres and about 39 percent of the state. However, less than one percent of the NSW population live in the region which has a population density of only 0.2 persons / kilometre².

More than half of the population in the Western region live in remote areas, which presents a unique transport challenge.

The region borders both Queensland and South Australia.

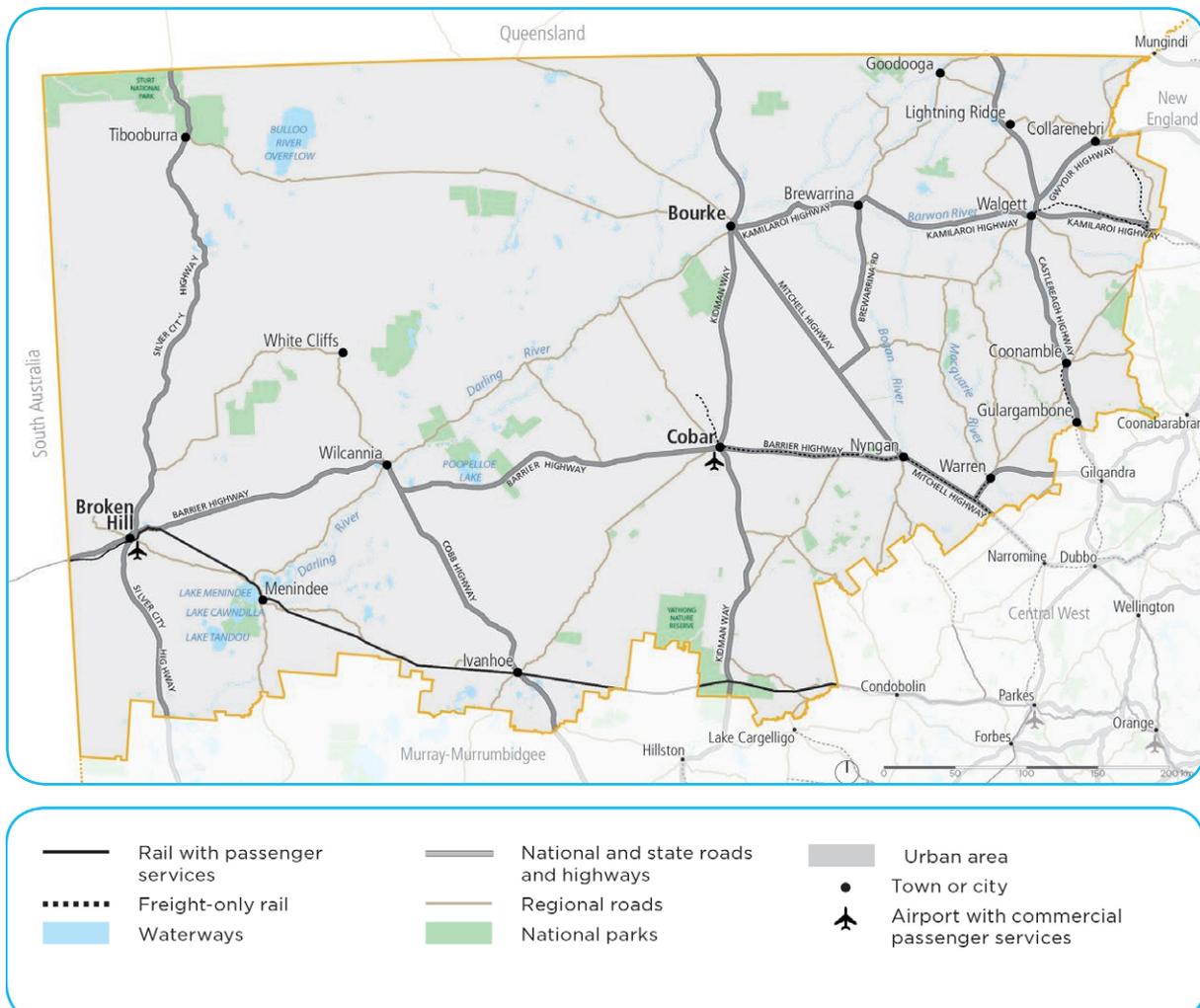
Residents of smaller towns and villages are reliant on access to health services, education and employment opportunities located in larger centres both within the region and in other regions.

The Major Regional Centre in the Western region is Broken Hill located in the far west of the region. A few smaller towns are located further east with Cobar, Coonamble and Bourke being the largest.

The eastern towns are served more by major centres in adjacent regions of NSW, such as Dubbo in the Central West region. Connection between the Western region and capital cities are split between Sydney and Adelaide.

Travel between smaller, dispersed populations and major centres across vast distances is difficult to serve by conventional public transport.

Figure 1 The Western region



The majority of the transport task occurs around the centres of Broken Hill, Cobar, Coonamble and Bourke. However, Walgett also has a high number of trips due to it being a regional hub for wool, wheat and cotton industries and the gateway to the NSW opal fields.

The population of the region has remained relatively stable, but has been consolidating in the larger towns of the Western region.

The transport system provides opportunities for people to access shopping, health, education, community and recreational activities. A dispersed population with geographic isolation challenges this system.

Customers in the Western region emphasised the importance of planning for the future to address the ageing population, social disadvantage and the vast distances travelled to access services and facilities. They also asked us to focus on the needs of business and the requirements to move produce and goods within and beyond the region.

The Western region has a population of around 49,000. About 57 percent of the population is concentrated within the four centres of: Broken Hill, Cobar, Coonamble and Bourke.

Nyngan, Walgett, Warren and Bourke have populations over 1000 people. With the population located in a handful of smaller isolated settlements, travel patterns are dispersed across the region.

Whilst only five percent of Aboriginal people live in remote and very remote areas, the proportion of Aboriginal people in local populations around NSW is highest in the Western region. A significant proportion of Aboriginal people live within the local government areas of Brewarrina (63.6 percent), Central Darling (39 percent), Bourke (32.1 percent) and Walgett (30.1 percent).

The population of the Western region is expected to age over the next 20 years, with the 65 years and over age group the only group forecast to increase in proportion. The proportion of the population aged 65 or over will increase from 16 percent in 2011 to 24 percent in 2031. This compares to an increase from 15 percent to 20 percent for NSW as a whole.

An ageing population presents some significant challenges for the transport network, with the elderly having higher reliance on public transport including on-demand and community transport and/or relatives or friends and needing to access health and aged care services in regional centres on a more regular basis.

The regional economy is strongly focused on the agricultural industries (17 percent). Major employment sectors include healthcare (12 percent), retail and education (9 percent), and mining and public administration (8 percent). The importance of mining has increased over recent years, as has education.

Within the Western region the small towns of Tibooburra, Milparinka and Silverton, as well as the surrounds of Broken Hill have higher levels of social disadvantage than the NSW state average. Brewarrina, Central Darling and Walgett are the first, second and third most disadvantaged local government areas in NSW.

Accessibility issues associated with long distances and limited public transport options are exacerbated when households have limited access to private vehicles.

The region's households have an average of 1.47 driver licences per household, below the state average of 1.89. In addition, the number of registered passenger vehicles per household is 0.56, less than the state average of 1.00. Low proportions of licensed drivers and/or registered vehicles in the Western region contributes to isolation and its associated impacts.



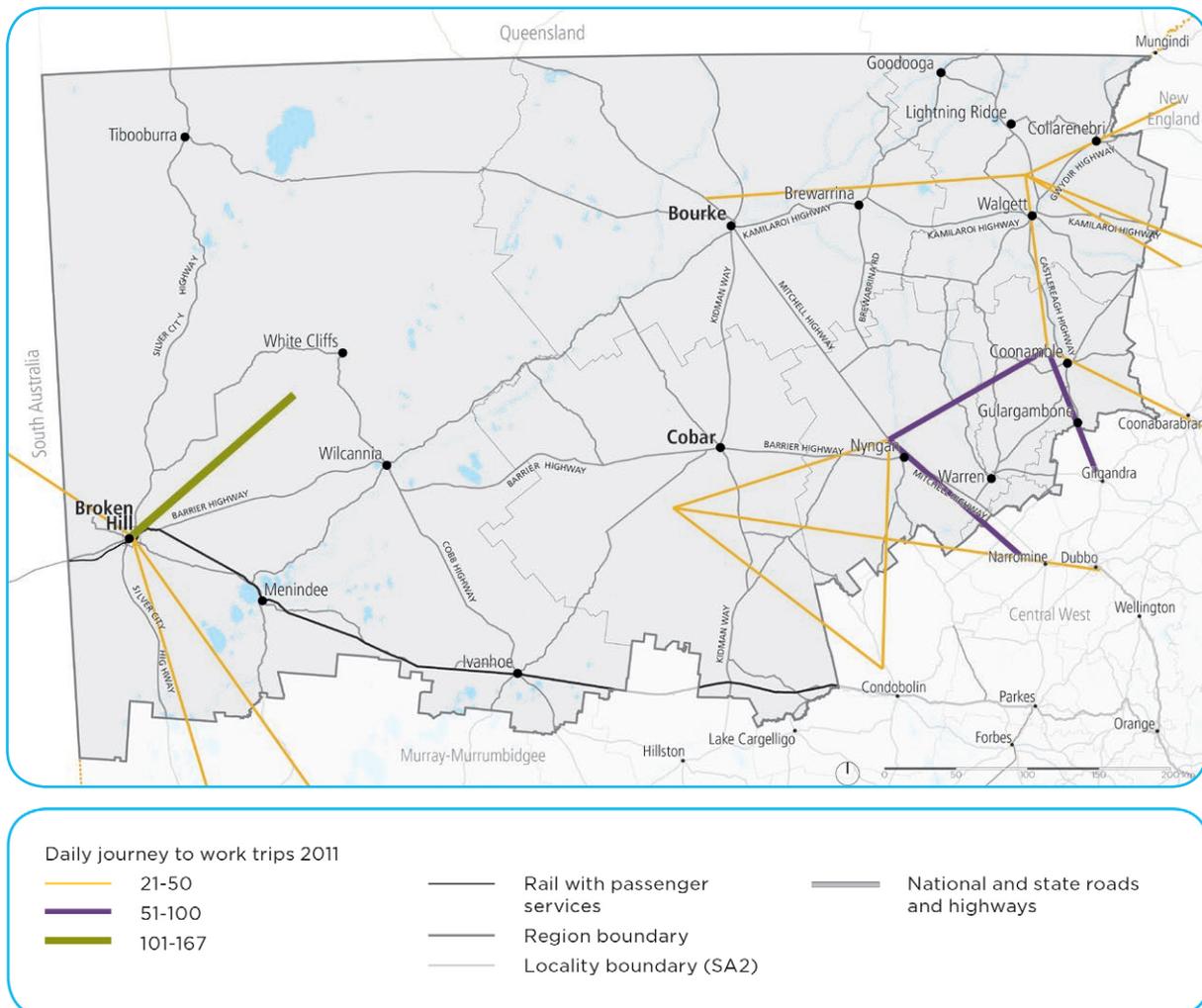
Social disadvantage in Western region is largely reflective of the classification of much of the region as 'very remote'. The only city in the region not considered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to be 'very remote' is Broken Hill (due to its airport). This remoteness is the biggest transport planning challenge for the Western region.

Approximately 97 percent of the journey to work travel is within the Western region, with only three percent travelling to other regions (Figure 2). Public transport makes up only one percent of trips to work.

A high proportion (12 percent) of commuters walked to work, compared with a state average of only five percent. This is most likely due to the urban area of Broken Hill being entirely within four kilometres of the town centre.

Car is the primary mode of travel in the Western region and this is unlikely to change significantly. However, community and flexible transport may play an increasingly important role.

Figure 2 Journey to work origins and destinations in the Western region



The specific population, employment and land use characteristics of the Western region have implications for the transport network, as follows:

Table 1 Transport implications of regional characteristics

Characteristic	Transport implication
Isolated region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong links to centres outside the region are essential • Air services provide an important mode of travel for critical health issues, business, fly-in fly-out workforces and tourism • Capital city connection is split between Sydney and Adelaide depending on location within the Western region
Social disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited public transport increases the level of isolation and disadvantage • High proportion of social and economic disadvantaged including people who cannot afford to own a car or hold driver licences are further disadvantaged by a lack of public transport options • Higher public transport fares in rural and regional NSW can reduce ability to access jobs and services
Decline in population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transport operations become less financially viable • Reduced services further isolates the population
Ageing population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater demand to travel for healthcare, medical and recreation reasons and less demand for travel to/from work and within peak periods • Need for more specialist transport services to cater for limited mobility and to reduce social isolation • Need for research and pilot projects to determine the best ways to transition people from cars to public transport and then to community transport to reduce car dependency
Significant population dispersed in many small settlements separated by long distances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High private car dependency • Dispersed trip patterns that work against public transport • Some settlements do not have all-weather access to their key major town, with heavy rain and flooding events cutting off towns and centres • Vastness and low-density, dispersed populations pose a major constraint to the transport services that can be implemented efficiently within the region
Reliance on key industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain adequate transport links to suit key industries • Ensure the transport network supports industries that are growing, emerging industries and new businesses
Road safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of heavy truck crashes in the Western region are widely spread along the Barrier and Castlereagh highways • Pedestrian casualty crashes are few in number but are clustered around the towns of Broken Hill, Cobar, Nyngan, Bourke and Walgett



DELIVERING CHANGE

Some of the initiatives already underway in the Western region include:

- The introduction of NSW TrainLink which operates services to the Western region, and for the first time provides a dedicated organisation focused on improving services for our rail customers in regional NSW
- Continued improvements to the Country Rail Network including installation of steel sleepers, replacement of timber bridges and culverts, level crossing upgrades and track resurfacing
- Completion of the upgrade to the Dubbo-Coonamble rail line which will allow current trains to run at higher speeds and allow more powerful locomotives to operate on the line
- The Western region will receive a share in \$389 million to support and improve rural and regional bus services
- The Western region will benefit from close to \$376,000 for the Community Transport Program as part of \$7.5 million in funding to local providers across the state
- An acceleration of the school zone flashing lights program, to ensure every school in NSW has a set of flashing lights by December 2015
- Investment of \$208 million over the next decade to install seatbelts on almost 1,700 dedicated school buses as part of a suite of initiatives to improve school bus safety in regional NSW.

2012-13 WESTERN ROAD NETWORK MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

For the 2012-13 financial year we spent \$50.9 million on upgrading and maintaining over 5,900 kilometres of major roads in the Western region, including works on pavement and corridors. We also spent \$5.7 million on upgrading and maintaining over 160 bridges in the Western region.

We provided \$28 million to the local councils within the region to assist with road restoration after natural disaster damage and \$14.8 million for maintenance and improvement of their road networks.

The works undertaken on major roads and bridges included road resurfacing of over 1,400,000 m² of roads and rebuilding 108,000 m² of roads, at a cost of \$7.4 million and \$6.7 million respectively.

Other major works undertaken in the Western region included the replacement of the Beemery Bridge over the Bogan River on Kamilaroi Highway and initial sealing of the Silver City Highway at Packsaddle.



Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grant Scheme

LGA	Improvement	Year	Cost (\$)
Bogan	Vanges Park bus shelter	2011-12	18,500
Bogan	Bus shelter installation at Mitchell Highway; concrete base and path construction at Mitchell Highway	2012-13	19,000
Walgett	Taxi shelter at Walgett CBD	2011-12	14,409
Warren	Warren Shire bus shelter enhancements	2011-12	8,600
Brewarrina	Bus terminal installation / upgrade at Bridge Road	2012-13	116, 639

Transport Access Program

Focus Area	Location	Projects	Completion date	Status
Station upgrades	Ivanhoe	Ramps between platform/ street	July 2012	Open to public



Traffic Management and Road Safety Program

LGA	Projects	Financial year	Status	Cost (\$)
Railway level crossings				
Cobar	Railway Level Crossing Improvement Program	2012-13	Completed	122,371
Active transport				
Central Darling	Central Darling Cycleway - Warrali Mission	2011-12	Completed	165,000
Brewarrina	Brewarrina cycleway design of a 2.5 metre wide spray sealed off-road walking and cycling path to the north of Bourke-Brewarrina Road from Darling Street, Brewarrina to Coolabah Street, West Brewarrina (Brewarrina West Aboriginal Community) (700 metres).	2013-14	Anticipated start late 2013	15,000
Road freight safety and productivity				
Warren	Nevertire rest area upgrade in Mitchell Highway	2011-12	Completed	487,311
Cobar	Install new heavy vehicle rest area on Barrier Highway at Barnato	2013-14	Anticipated start late 2013	820,000
Road safety				
Bourke	Install pedestrian refuge and off-road walking and cycling path at Adelaide Street and Parkdale Road, Mitchell Highway in Bourke	2013-14	Commenced October 2013	422,000

Better Boating Program

LGA	Improvement	Year	Cost (\$)
Walgett	Collarenebri boat ramp upgrade, Collarenebri (Barwon River)	2011-12	79,200
Warren	Bottom Weir boat ramp upgrade, Warren	2011-12	19,045
Central Darling	Lake Menindee boat ramp upgrade, Sunset Strip	2012-13	15,555
	Menindee boat ramp, Menindee (Darling River)	2012-13	26,500



CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE NSW LONG TERM TRANSPORT MASTER PLAN

The *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* identified the main transport challenges facing regional NSW as:

- Delivering better transport links to and within regional cities
- Improving accessibility through a better mix of transport options across regional NSW
- Providing convenient, reliable and safe travel in regional areas by modernising and making best use of our transport networks – especially our bus, rail, and taxi services
- Making sure our state roads in the regions support the needs of customers, communities and regional industries
- Finding workable transport solutions that will preserve the vitality, amenity and character of country towns
- Making walking and cycling easier and safer and giving customers choice when travelling within their towns
- Facilitating access to vital services for an ageing regional NSW population and people with disabilities
- Identifying and preserving key transport corridors.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS FOR THE WESTERN REGION IN THE NSW LONG TERM TRANSPORT MASTER PLAN

Short term

- The vastness of the Western region poses many challenges. Road-based transport will remain the primary mode for travel in the region. The Mitchell and Barrier (A32) highways are important to the economic viability of the region. Our focus will be on maintaining the region's roads to a suitable standard.
- Mining will remain a major industry in the Western region, particularly around Broken Hill. We will support a heavy vehicle haulage bypass of Broken Hill to improve travel efficiency for the mining and agricultural industries.
- The Western region has the highest use of community transport in regional NSW per capita. We will continue to support community transport services for the region and make appropriate resources available.

Medium to longer term

- We are committed to providing accessibility and equity to people in the Western region by supporting good transport access to Broken Hill, Dubbo, Sydney and Newcastle for goods and services. Our longer term focus will ensure realistic travel options exist, whether by air, rail or bus. This will require continued investment to maintain transport infrastructure and services to a suitable standard.
- Road safety infrastructure assessments for Aboriginal communities have identified road safety issues on state roads, the local road network and roads in Aboriginal communities that connect to the nearby towns with access to goods and services. A program of infrastructure works will include sealing roads, installing delineation (such as line marking and signage) and building pedestrian facilities.



PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST

The NSW Government is committed to putting the customer first by delivering a transport system that:

- Delivers a safer road transport system
- Provides more reliable services
- Gets people in NSW's regions where they need to go
- Delivers a safe, clean and comfortable public transport environment
- Provides revised timetables for public transport services to match travel needs
- Reduces travel times for all travellers
- Enables businesses and services to operate efficiently and prosper in regional areas.

This plan will ensure that the transport system in the Western region is effective in meeting the needs of the community by responding to the goals expressed by them, tackling transport challenges, and addressing the expected changes over the next 20 years.

The plan will pursue this vision by developing actions around the three key themes of:

- 1 Providing better transport services
- 2 Ensuring effective regulation
- 3 Improving transport infrastructure

The *Western Regional Transport Plan* will improve the customer experience for intra-regional and inter-regional journeys and for visitors to the region.

Infrastructure solutions focused on the region's road network will enable customers to reach their destination more reliably and more safely. For public transport users, passengers will see service improvements and better connections to key destinations.

This plan includes actions and projects that will deliver better transport services; ensure effective regulation; and improve transport infrastructure over the short (0-5 years), medium (5-10 years) and long (10-20 years) term.

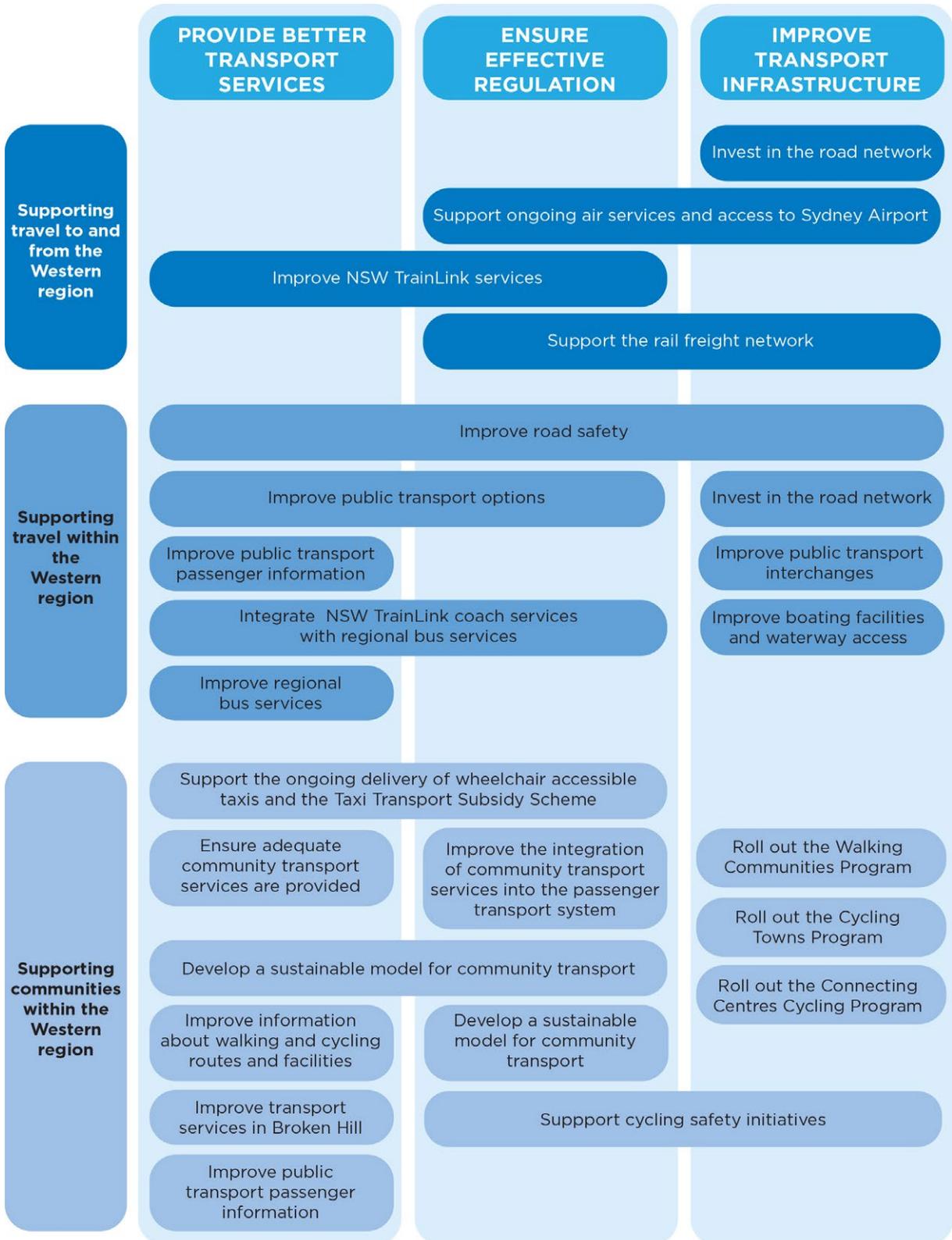


WHAT YOU TOLD US

You told us that there is common set of goals for transport in regional NSW. While the priority of these goals will vary for each specific region, these goals are:

- Improving accessibility to transport for everyone
- Appreciating the importance of intra and inter regional connectivity
- Recognising the importance of air travel
- Addressing cross-border connectivity issues
- Recognising the growing freight task and its impact
- Making sure that the transport solutions for the regions support growth and development, whilst protecting the viability and amenity of centres and towns.

Figure 3 Themes and actions summary



The *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* sets the strategic direction for transport in the state. The *Western Regional Transport Plan* provides more detail for the region.

The Regional Transport Plans link to other plans, including *NSW 2021*, and the *Orana and Far West Regional Action Plans* (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Inter-relationships of plans



TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE WESTERN REGION

The Western region borders Queensland and South Australia, as well as the Murray-Murrumbidgee, Central West and New England North West regions of NSW.

There is strong travel demand to these other regions and States for the movement of goods and produce and for passenger access to business, education, health and government administration services.

While western settlements within the region rely on the major centre of Broken Hill, eastern settlements are served by major centres outside of the region such as Dubbo (Central West). Access to capital cities from the Western region is shared between Adelaide and Sydney.

The Western region has a diverse freight task, with a range of industry supply chains, which vary from mining to agricultural services and require different types of transport options.

The agriculture industry requires the efficient movement of goods, and seasonal, perishable produce. Road and rail freight travelling between other regions of NSW, Queensland and South Australia through the Western region, require direct, high quality transport options.

Transport movements to and from the Western region are concentrated in eight corridors, as shown in Figure 5:

- Barrier Highway and Kidman Way corridor from Adelaide to Brisbane via Broken Hill, Cobar, Bourke, Walgett, Moree and Goondiwindi
- Silver City Highway corridor to Queensland and Victoria
- Barrier Highway corridor to the Central West region
- Mitchell Highway from Queensland into the Central West region

- Kamilaroi Highway corridor to the New England North West region
- Castlereagh Highway from Queensland into the Central West region
- Gwydir Highway corridor into the New England North West region
- The Western line to Broken Hill serviced by train and coach services from Orange.

Transport challenges affecting travel to and from the Western region are:

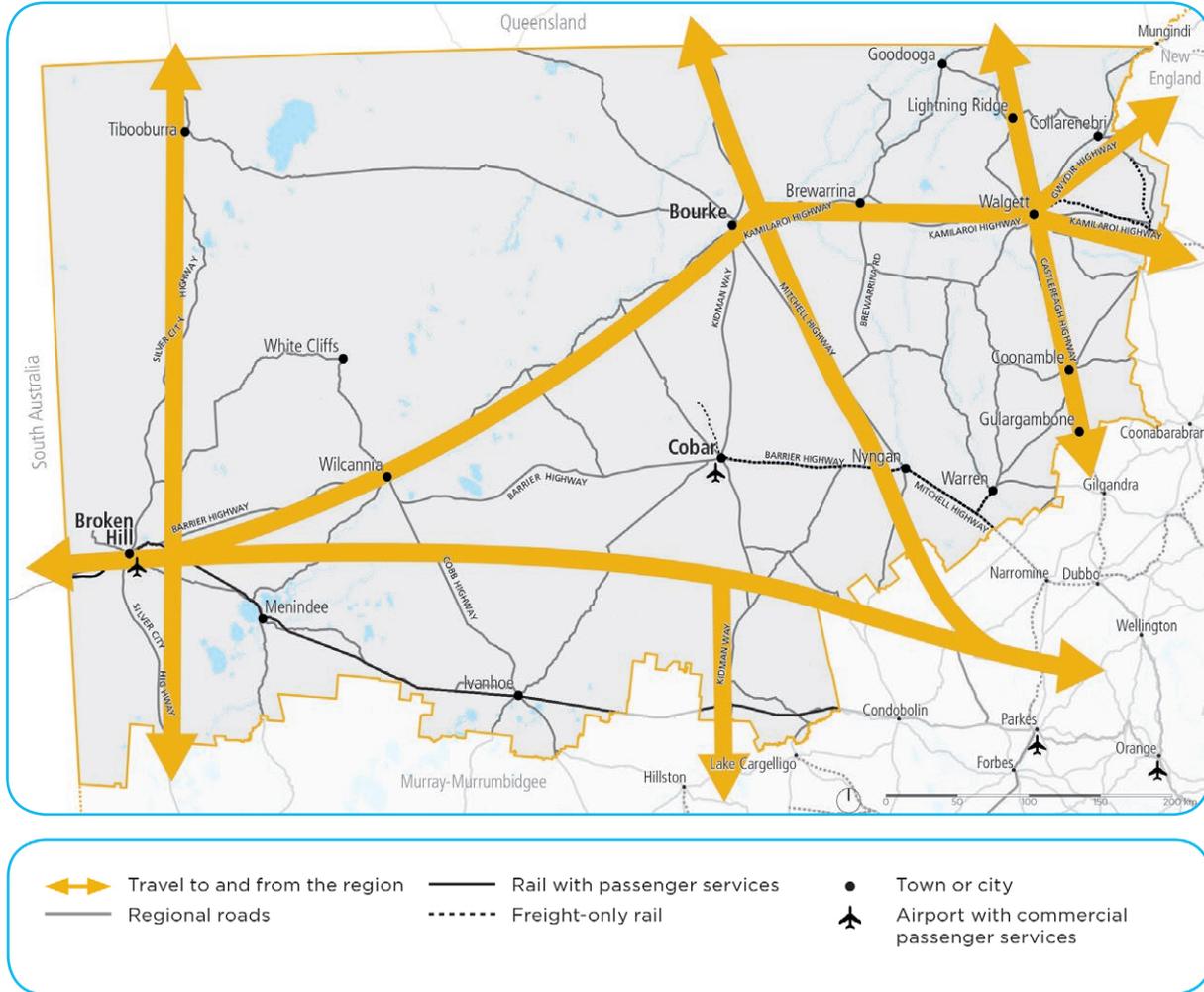
- Ensuring road connections to and from the region enable and support growth and opportunity
- Improving access to and from the region by road, rail and air to reduce isolation and support business and economic growth
- Aligning service levels of inter-regional train and coach services with travel needs within the Western region
- Providing for the growing freight task, while recognising the impact it will have on regional towns.

Actions for supporting travel to and from the region are designed to:

- Invest in the road network
- Support the rail freight network
- Improve NSW TrainLink services to improve passenger train and coach services
- Support ongoing air services and access to Sydney Airport.



Figure 5 Main transport corridors for travel to and from the Western region



Road and freight network

Action: Invest in the road network

We will continue to maintain and upgrade the Western region road network, focusing on improving safety, increasing accessibility and enhancing freight efficiency.

The major road transport links to and from the Western region support economic growth and regional development. They provide connections to Sydney and Adelaide and to key regional centres such as Dubbo and Mildura.

Some parts of the existing road network pose a major constraint to the efficient movement of freight. This is due to sections of highways and local roads being unsealed and prone to closure

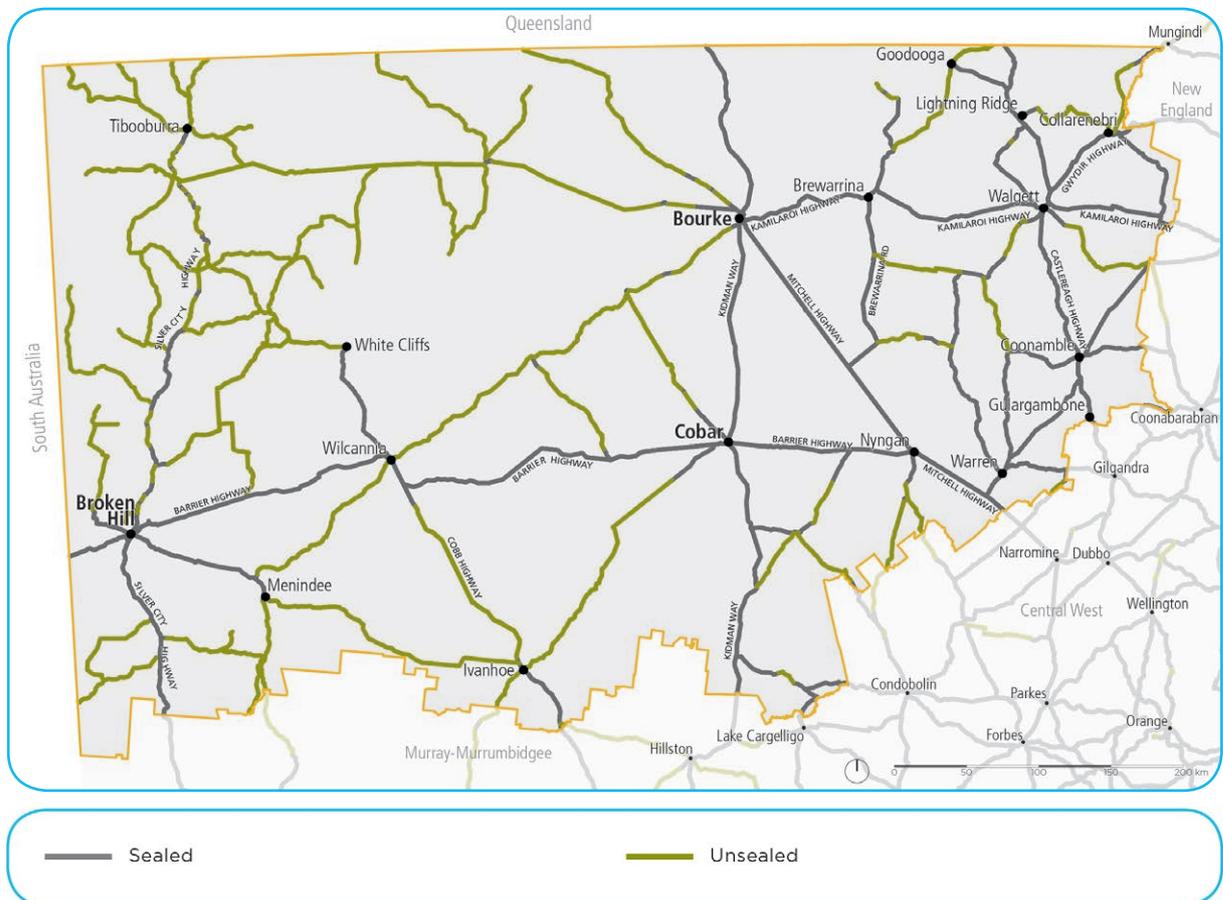
following rain (Figure 6). For example the condition of the Silver City Highway can affect freight movements to and from Queensland.

Freight transport requires direct routes to ensure that goods are moved safely and efficiently within and through the region. It also has impacts on centres and communities which experience heavy vehicle traffic. We will work to improve road conditions to address current highway constraints affecting the safe and efficient movement of people and goods to and from the Western region.

This includes support for the Broken Hill heavy vehicle bypass, which has received funding from the second round of the Regional Development Australia Fund.



Figure 6 Sealed and unsealed roads in the Western region



On completion, the bypass will improve safety for residents by removing heavy vehicles from main thoroughfares in Broken Hill.

It will also reduce the cost of new mining operations by providing a direct transport corridor linking outlying mineral deposits and processing plants.

Action: Support the rail freight network

We will continue to support investments in rail infrastructure to improve the rail freight network.

A dedicated rail freight network runs through the centres of Walgett, Cobar, Nyngan and Warren.

The rail line from Broken Hill to Orange is a combined passenger and freight line which also serves the Parkes National Logistics Hub. This strategically important intermodal terminal connects the rail freight network with

road links to Melbourne and Brisbane via the Newell Highway.

The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) is currently undertaking a feasibility and alignment study for an inland rail route between Melbourne and Brisbane. If feasible, this line could also improve the efficiency of rail freight movements to and from the Western region.

The Northern Sydney Freight Corridor is a critical link in the movement of interstate freight and supports important passenger movements, as well as domestic coal movements to power stations on the Central Coast. The Northern Sydney Freight Corridor program being delivered in conjunction with the Australian Government will lift freight carrying capacity between Newcastle and Sydney by 50 percent and key infrastructure enhancements, like the Hexham Passing Loop, can alleviate specific constraints that improve reliability and reduce travel times for freight movements.



Rail and coach services

Action: Improve NSW TrainLink services to improve passenger train and coach services

We will develop a future NSW TrainLink service plan for rail and coach services plan for the Western region. This will be incorporated into the development of a long term plan for regional rail and aligned with coach services operating in the region.

Rail and coach services currently connect the Western region with Dubbo, Sydney, Toowoomba, Mildura and Adelaide. The social, employment, education and health links with other states and with the major regional centre of Dubbo are critical to the well-being of residents of the Western region. They also facilitate business and economic growth.

The Broken Hill Outback Explorer operates once a week (Tuesdays from Broken Hill to Sydney, Mondays from Sydney to Broken Hill) via Parkes, Blayney, Bathurst and Lithgow.

At other times a network of NSW TrainLink coaches connect with the daily train service to/from Sydney at Dubbo. These coaches provide services to Coonamble, Coolabah, Brewarrina, Cobar, Bourke, Broken Hill and smaller intermediate settlements.

Private coach services (Buses R Us) operate from Broken Hill to Mildura twice a week (connecting at Mildura with Greyhound Australia services to Melbourne), and from Broken Hill to Adelaide three times a week.



A twice weekly coach service (Coach Queensland, on behalf of Greyhound Australia) also operates between Lightning Ridge and Toowoomba, connecting at Toowoomba with Greyhound Australia services to Brisbane.

The NSW TrainLink service plan for the Western region will develop transport initiatives to improve the attractiveness of public transport for travel to and from the region. We will examine opportunities to realign rail and coach timetables to:

- Improve connections and service frequency
- Improve the range of travel opportunities
- Provide comprehensive printed and electronic timetable and travel information for regional rail and coach travel
- Continue to work with the Queensland, South Australian and Victorian governments on cross border transport services and infrastructure so that connections between the Western region and key locations in adjoining states are maintained
- Improve the integration between local and regional bus services and NSW TrainLink train services across the region.

We will invest in improvements to the NSW TrainLink fleet to improve service levels and customer experience. Actions will include:

- Reviewing fleet maintenance and stabling locations, to improve overall reliability and availability of the fleet.
- Ensuring the current NSW TrainLink fleet receives maintenance to ensure reliability
- Fleet replacement to help boost flexibility in the design of services and offer greater passenger comfort. This will be managed in line with a *NSW TrainLink Fleet and Maintenance Strategy* that will program future rolling-stock investment.



Air services

Action: Support ongoing air services and access to Sydney Airport

We will investigate opportunities to improve commercial air services to the Western region, including to remote communities.

Air travel is very important for the Western region as it provides access to services in major regional centres and capital cities. Regular passenger services to and from the Western region operate from Broken Hill and from Cobar:

- Broken Hill airport (picture below) is served by Regional Express. Each week it supports 11 return flights to Dubbo, 18 return flights to Sydney, 11 return flights to Mildura and 19 return flights to Adelaide. It is also the base for the Royal Flying Doctor Service
- Cobar Airport is served by Brindabella Airlines (fleet pictured below). Each week it supports 12 return flights to Sydney.

Efficient and reasonably priced air travel is necessary to ensure that access to medical, employment, business and leisure opportunities is maintained.

Delivering government services and support to remote and isolated communities requires local, state and Australian government to regularly access these areas.

We will investigate opportunities to improve commercial air services to include remote communities such as Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Brewarrina and Bourke.

Regional flight slots at Sydney Airport determine the convenience of air travel for regional communities accessing Sydney by air.

We will support maintenance of the 20 percent of flight slots allocated to regional NSW services and will seek a greater allocation in the peak periods.

“As well as maintaining the current services into Sydney, Transport for NSW licences routes that operate with less than 50,000 passengers per annum including Broken Hill and Cobar. The current licences will run until 2018 and grant exclusive rights of operation on the route for the term of the licence.

Having passenger services at regional airports also strengthens the viability of these airports and allows them to service some freight and general aviation including urgent medical deliveries and some freight access.

Charter and private flights from NSW’s regional, rural and remote airports allow those who work and live outside the major cities to access the specialist health, education, commercial and recreational facilities that are not economically available where they normally reside; allow travel by health professionals to the regional community, and enable regional residents to maintain relationships with distant families and friends.

Transport for NSW is currently supporting the Department of Premier and Cabinet led project looking into the feasibility of expanding commercial air services to remote communities in western NSW, including Lightning Ridge, Walgett, Brewarrina and Bourke.

The study is being informed through consultation with local, state and commonwealth government agencies and local communities to assess potential demand for expanded air services. This information will then be provided to commercial airlines for their consideration.

Broken Hill airport also plays a significant role in providing medical services to rural and remote communities as the headquarters of the Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS).



TRAVEL WITHIN THE WESTERN REGION

Travel within the Western region is focused on four corridors providing connections between regional centres (Figure 7).

Barrier Highway Corridor

This corridor connects Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Cobar and Nyngan. This corridor also supports freight movements from Cobar and accommodates longer distance trips to the Central West region.

Mitchell Highway Corridor

This corridor links Bourke, Nyngan and Warren and accommodates longer distance trips from the Western region to the Central West region.

Kamilaroi Highway corridor

This corridor connects Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett as well as connecting the Western region to New England.

Castlereagh Highway corridor

This corridor links Walgett and Coonamble to the Central West region.

There are a number of challenges affecting travel within the Western region:

- Providing safer roads
- Improve boating facilities and waterway access
- Providing all-weather access to communities
- Providing for the needs of non-drivers or those with no access to transport
- Getting the most out of the rail, coach and bus services in the region
- Public transport fares are high in comparison to those in the metropolitan areas
- Improving connections between smaller towns and regional centres
- High public transport fares in comparison to those in metropolitan areas
- The lack of a single comprehensive source of public transport information.

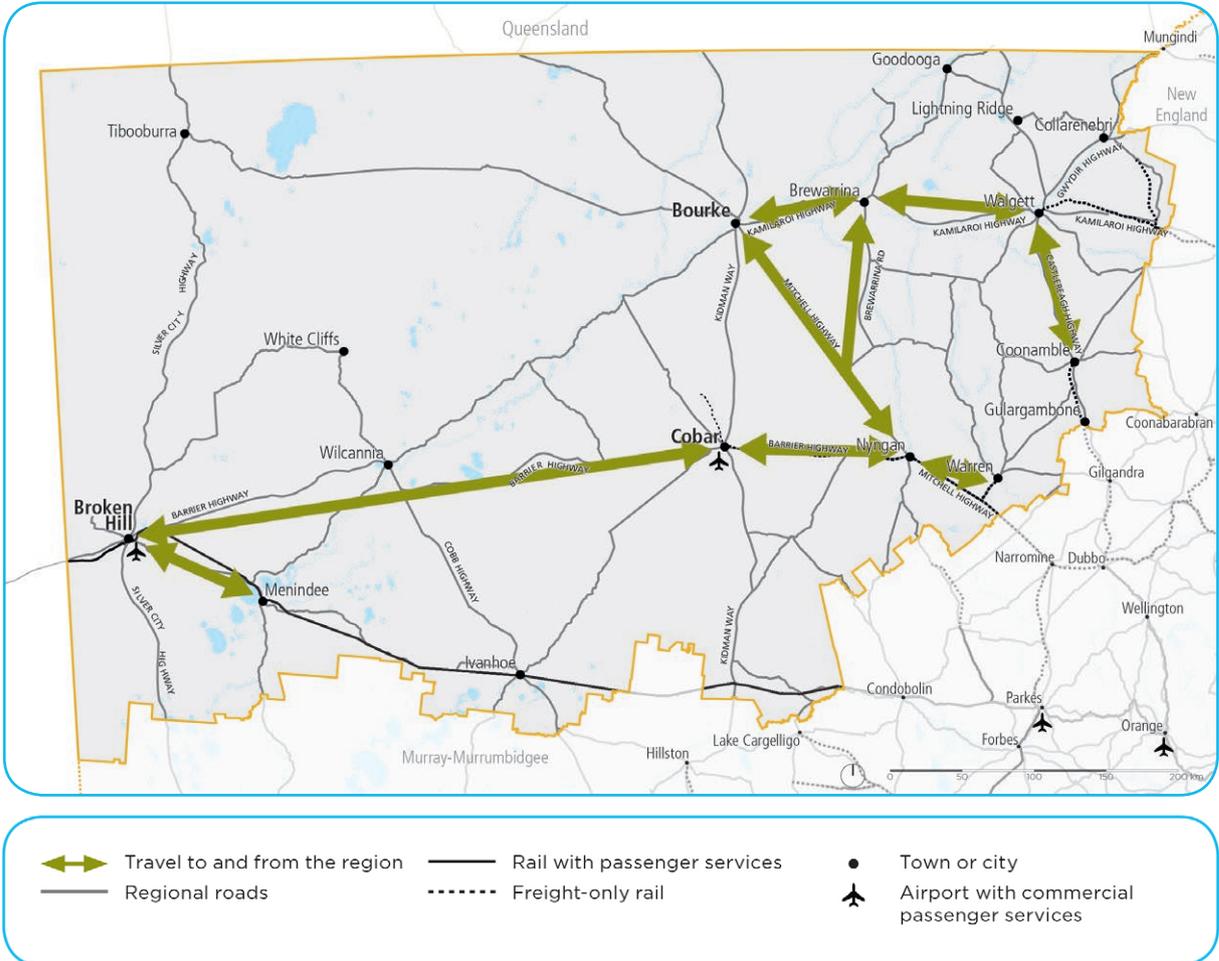
Addressing these challenges is important to support regional development, economic growth and productivity, and to reduce social disadvantage.

Actions for supporting travel within the Western region include measures to:

- Improve road safety
- Invest in the road network
- Improve boating facilities and waterway access
- Improve public transport options
- Improve regional bus services.
- Integrate NSW TrainLink coach services with regional bus services
- Improve public transport interchanges.



Figure 7 Major travel corridors within the Western region



Transport
MASTER PLAN

↓

Regional
Transport
Plan

Improving Transport within the Western region

Action: Improve road safety

We will continue to progress the actions of The *NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-21* to achieve the *NSW 2021* target of reducing fatalities to 4.3 per 100,000 population by 2016.

The rate of fatal crashes in the Western region is higher than the state average. Casualties involving alcohol use, non-restraint use, fatigue and speed related crashes are also high.

In the Western region road safety infrastructure assessments for Aboriginal communities have identified issues on state roads, the local road network and roads in Aboriginal communities that connect to the nearby towns.

In the Western region our priority actions are:

- Continue targeted safety works programs, including improving clear zones, safety barriers and highway route reviews
- Deliver safer road infrastructure on state and local roads leading to Aboriginal communities
- Investigate infrastructure treatments such as rest areas, signage to enhance road safety on the highway network for heavy vehicle drivers
- Support enforcement activities to deter speeding through the use of high visibility police enforcement and automated speed camera activities
- Target crash risk assessment on higher volume roads, using the route safety review process across the key freight routes
- Improve heavy vehicle compliance through targeted enforcement to address speeding, fatigue, drug impairment and distraction
- Provide heavy vehicle rest areas on major routes
- Investigate options for automatic crash notification systems, including collision detection and avoidance systems

- Educate drivers about the added risks of crashes in remote areas
- Provide advice to road users on what to do if they breakdown or crash and on safety issues near incident sites.

In addition to specific black-spot treatments, the *NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-21* will address more systemic challenges. This strategy recognises that road geometry is only part of the challenge and it aims to achieve safer vehicles, safer speeds and safer people, in addition to safer roads.

We will continue to work with Aboriginal health, transport and childcare workers to assist in promoting the use of child restraints and seatbelts in vehicles in Aboriginal communities.

We will also continue the Graduated Licensing Scheme (GLS) in Aboriginal communities which promotes road safety and responsibility.

In the last three years Roads and Maritime Services has conducted 40 GLS workshops in Aboriginal communities in the Western region, attended by 490 Aboriginal people.

Action: Invest in the road network

We will continue to prioritise investment in safe, all-weather access to communities and to manage the movement and impacts of freight vehicles.

The road network in the Western region comprises over 3,000 kilometres of state roads. Unsealed sections of highways and local roads can be prone to closure following rain events.

Road closure poses a major constraint to the efficient movement of freight, and can prevent some communities from accessing services, facilities and supplies available in key centres or larger towns for significant periods.

We will work with local councils to develop and communicate adverse weather and closed road emergency transport and safety plans.



Action: Improve boating facilities and waterway access

We will develop a new Boating Infrastructure Partnership Program to build on the Roads and Maritime Services' successful Better Boating Program. The new funding program will provide grants to local councils and will be informed by a comprehensive audit of waterways to identify priority boating safety, access and infrastructure projects.

Action: Improve public transport options

Currently, public transport within the Western region is largely limited to coach travel or community transport bus. Timetables for coach services are designed to connect with rail services at Dubbo and not for connections between towns and villages within the region.

A limited level of public transport availability within the Western region contributes to a high level of car dependence.

Community Access Bus services, supported by Central Darling Shire Council, are currently provided between Wilcannia and Broken Hill, and between Menindee and Broken Hill. They operate on weekdays, providing access to services and facilities in Broken Hill, with preference given to customers requiring health services at Broken Hill Hospital.

We will work in partnership with local public transport providers to develop service delivery models, routes and timetables which improve services and align them more specifically with local needs.

Action: Improve regional bus services

We will work in partnership with local bus operators to introduce a more robust contractual framework for local and regional buses.

We will work with the bus operators to develop routes and timetables which improve outcomes for bus users. We will develop a service framework that matches routes, coverage, hours of operation and vehicles with specific local needs.

Bus services provide the majority of public transport services for travel within the Western region. These regional bus services provide connections to the region's major centres from towns and villages.

Our new framework for inter-town buses will target improvements designed to:

- Improve the frequency and hours of operation for routes between regions
- Define base service requirements for village to town services including at least morning, afternoon and early evening return trip opportunities
- Consolidate routes to increase the range of destinations provided without the need to transfer between services
- Create a connected network of services within the region supported by local services within each centre and by connections to smaller villages.

Bus services for school children in the Western region will continue to be provided as these services are an essential public transport service in the region.

Action: Integrate NSW TrainLink coach services with regional bus services

We will review timetables and service levels for train and coach services as part of the long term plan for regional rail.

We will identify opportunities to incorporate improved connectivity within the region in addition to long distance train connections.

Coach services are primarily part of a system that provides for travel to destinations outside the region. However, in using the major roads in the region, they also make connections to major centres. The long term plan for regional rail will advance planning for the integration of these services.

We will aim to use coach services as part of the regional bus system as well as serving travel to destinations outside the region. One initiative that will be investigated is for NSW



TrainLink coach services to pick up and set down at multiple key destinations in the major towns and cities. These might include the airport and the main shopping centre as well as the traditional stop at the railway station.

Action: Improve public transport interchanges

Interchanges are important as part of the public transport network.

We will ensure that major transport interchange points across NSW are assessed and benchmarked against interchange standards. We will develop a program of interchange improvements works to ensure that our interchanges meet customer needs.

We will make interchanging between public transport services easier by taking a customer centred view.

We will work to integrate public transport services by:

- Ensuring major interchanges are clean, well lit, with comfortable seating, and shelter for passengers
- Ensuring that services are available at interchanges
- Coordinating timetables to make interchange seamless between all modes, including buses and trains
- Improving wayfinding, signage and the physical cues people use to find their way around interchanges
- Improving customer information including service information, ticketing and timetables.

We will also continue to roll out Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants.



SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE WESTERN REGION

The Western region has a range of distinct characteristics that lead to restricted access to transport. As a result, the groups that are experiencing transport disadvantaged are bigger than in other regions.

People in the following groups may be transport disadvantaged depending on individual circumstances:

- Elderly people, who may have limited mobility or can no longer drive a car
- People with disabilities and their carers
- People and families in isolated areas with limited or no access to a car and/or without driver licences
- Young people who are too young to hold a driver licence or unable to obtain a licence
- Aboriginal people experiencing social disadvantage.

The lack of access to services and facilities experienced by people who are experiencing transport disadvantage means that they have less opportunity to participate in the local economy. The impact of this reduced participation (from what might be possible) is likely to have a negative impact on economic growth and development in the Western region.

The actions to support travel for transport disadvantaged communities within the Western region include:

- Improve public transport passenger information

- Support the ongoing delivery of wheelchair accessible vehicles and the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme
- Investigate flexible transport options
- Roll out the Walking Communities Program
- Connecting Centres Cycling Program
- Roll out the Cycling Towns Program
- Improve information about walking and cycling routes and facilities

Action: Improve public transport passenger information

We will improve online customer information for the Western region.

Transport for NSW's Country Transport website provides bus timetable information to, from or within each town, but there is no single information point for bus trips that require an interchange. There is also no single map that describes services across the Western region.

We will develop an integrated and comprehensive single source of transport timetables, maps, fares and customer information to help people understand their transport options.



Action: Support the ongoing delivery of wheelchair accessible vehicles and the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme

The 24 hour nature of the taxi network and its ability to provide an immediate response to individual needs provides opportunities not afforded by bus.

We will continue to support the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles in the taxi fleets in towns in the Western region. We will maintain the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme and support the better availability of services on weekends and outside core business hours.

FLEXIBLE TRANSPORT

Flexible or demand responsive transport may provide one element of the service improvement program for Broken Hill. Flexible transport can provide a means by which to meet particular needs such as early morning or late evening services, services to nearby, but out of town settlements, estates or villages, services to particular facilities such as nursing homes and hostels, etc.

In developing a bus service improvement program we will investigate the applicability of a range of service delivery models. Developing flexible service options will require us to work with local bus operators, taxi operators and community transport providers to make the best use of available transport resources and to provide the most appropriate mode and delivery model for different needs and for different times of the day or week. In this way we can seek to maximise the value of these resources to local communities by utilising available spare capacity to help alleviate transport disadvantage.

We will consider the success or otherwise of flexible transport projects previously trialled in Broken Hill such as the Pool Transport initiative. This was a joint venture between Transport for NSW, Broken Hill City Council and the Yellow Taxi Company. The service was designed to allow young people and families with limited transport options to access recreational activities outside the operating hours of the town bus service, providing them with a safe and reliable transport service home. The service was provided by a Maxi Taxi.

A further example of flexible transport is the Northern Rivers Carpool project. This is a web based car-pooling network designed to create links between community members travelling on similar transport routes. The project focuses on people with transport disadvantage anywhere within the region. We will investigate opportunities where a similar scheme may be applicable for travel in and around the Western region.



Walking and Cycling

Many regional towns in NSW are ideal for walking and cycling for transport. Almost 90 percent of people in regional NSW live within easy walking or cycling distance of a local centre, with access to shops, schools, and workplaces.

Wider streets, lower traffic volumes and safe routes in regional centres will make walking and cycling safer and more convenient transport options.

We will work to ensure that any transport project or land use development includes appropriate provision for walking and cycling from the design stage.

We will also assist councils to integrate walking and cycling into their ten year Community Strategic Plans to ensure there is more

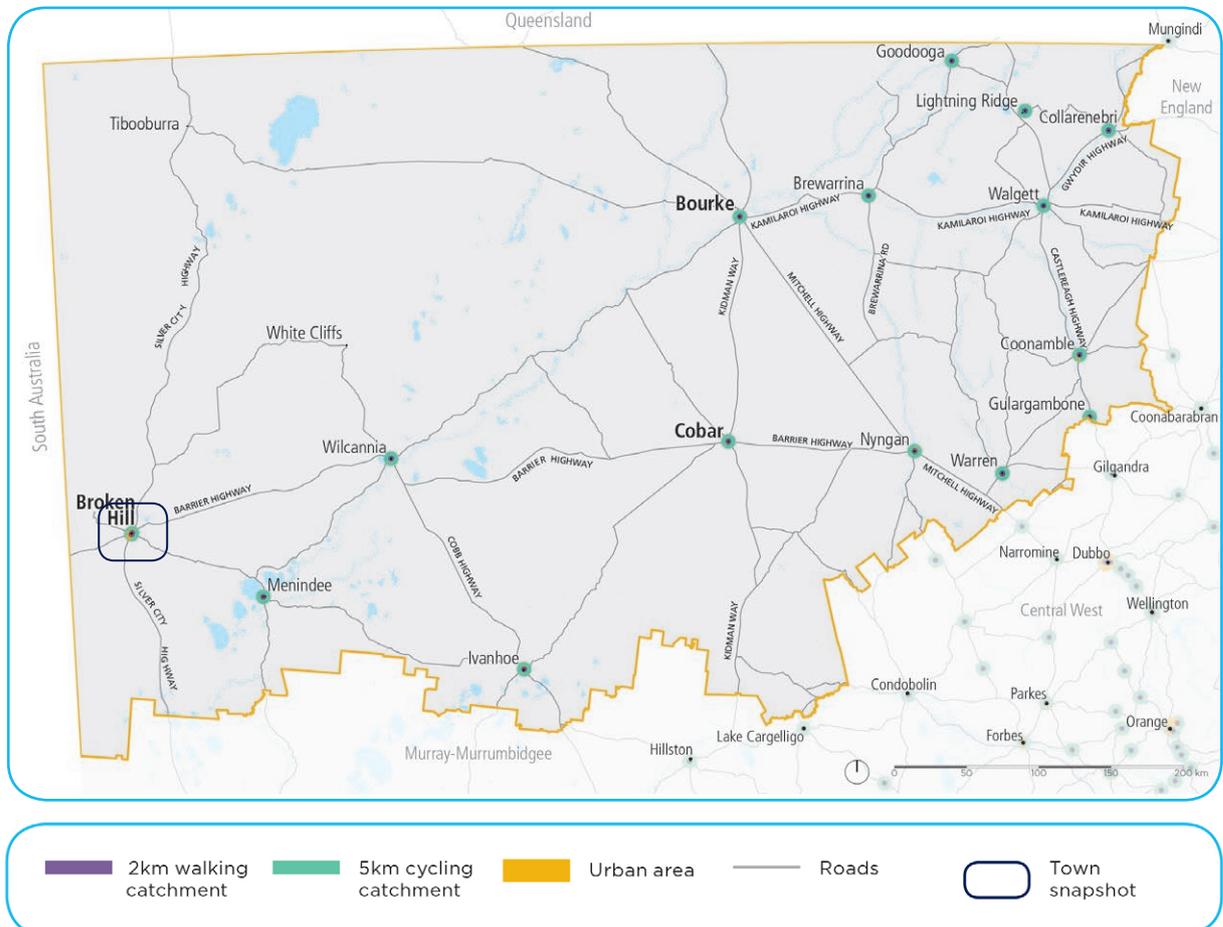
provision for walking and cycling and promote this approach with Regional Organisations of Councils.

Action: Roll out the Walking Communities Program

The Walking Communities Program will deliver state infrastructure investments and contribute to local government initiatives to help boost rates of walking.

We will provide dedicated funding to help local councils improve walking infrastructure within two kilometre catchments of centres and transport interchanges.

Figure 8 Western walking and cycling catchments

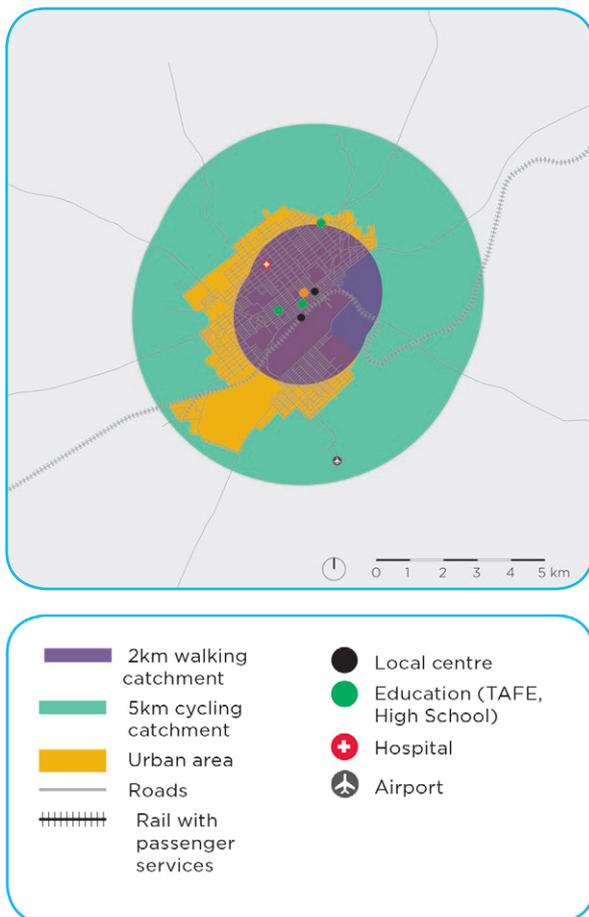


Action: Connecting Centres Cycling Program

We will work with councils and other stakeholders to identify bicycle network gaps and pinch points in the five kilometre catchments that surround regional towns.

The Connecting Centres Program will help councils to complete local cycle networks to regional centres in partnership with local councils. We will also work with councils and bicycle user groups to get more people riding on this network and provide better information to customers.

Figure 9 Broken Hill walking and cycling catchments



Action: Roll out the Cycling Towns Program

The Cycling Towns Program will focus bicycle infrastructure provision and encouragement in a small number of regional centres with the aim to rapidly increase rates of cycling in these areas.

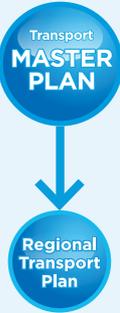
Two regional centres will be selected for initial investment in the Cycling Towns Program by the NSW Government, to be delivered in partnership with local councils. Candidate towns must demonstrate that a range of destinations is within easy cycling distance from their residential centres. They will require political support, and a commitment to maintain new infrastructure and complementary promotion measures.

Cycling Towns Programs may include bicycle network construction and bicycle parking facilities, complemented by local government funded encouragement programs, and support for tourist routes and information for visitors.

Action: Improve information about walking and cycling routes and facilities

We will get people walking and cycling more by promoting the benefits of active transport, improving customer information, and developing guidelines and resources for local government. This will include improved online resources, such as trip planning, as well as other programs to promote walking and cycling for transport.

We will also continue to sponsor events and community programs, such as NSW Bike Week, which promote active transport.



Broken Hill

Broken Hill is the Western region's Major Regional Centre. It is a regional focal point providing high levels of services, employment and housing, and is the only town with a local bus network.

The key transport generators within Broken Hill include the airport, train station, the town centre, Broken Hill Base Hospital, and the Centro Westside Shopping Centre.

Action: Improve public transport services

We will work with the local bus operator and council to develop a transport service improvement program for Broken Hill.

We will review the bus network to ensure that it meets customer need and provides coverage of the centre's major trip generators.

Current bus service levels in Broken Hill are outlined in Table 2, below. We will investigate opportunities to improve service levels or to increase the span of operating hours.

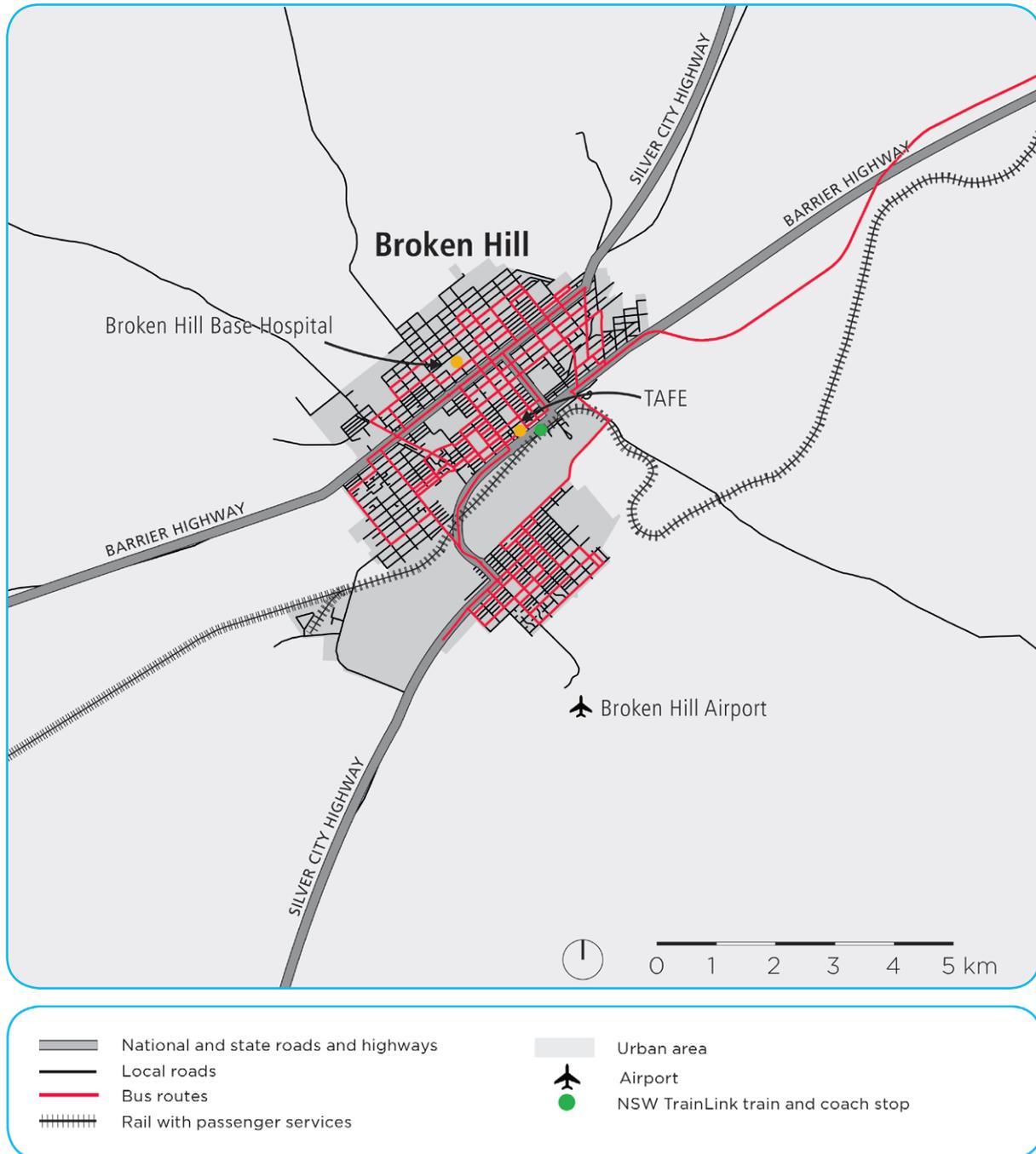
The Transport Service Improvement Program for Broken Hill will support Broken Hill and its role as a Major Regional Centre by identifying opportunities to:

- Improve service frequencies to key destinations
- Extend operating hours to include earlier and later services on weekdays, and later services on Saturdays
- Investigate the potential introduction of Sunday services
- Improve the infrastructure that supports services, such as bus stops and shelters, terminal facilities and customer information
- Meet coverage gaps by providing flexible/demand responsive services.

Table 2 Bus services in Broken Hill

Weekday				Saturday				Sunday		
No. of routes	Trips	Trips per route	Span	No. of routes	Trips	Trips per route	Span	Trips	Trips per route	Span
4	33	8	8-17	2	7	3	9-13	0	0	0

Figure 10 Broken Hill town centre



STRENGTHENING AND SUPPORTING REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The NSW Government established the Independent Local Government Review Panel in May 2012. The Review Panel identified the following challenges facing far western districts of NSW:

- Declining local populations
- Increasing proportions of Aboriginal populations
- Weakening local economies and the loss of critical economic mass
- High levels of social disadvantage
- Lack of trust and collaboration between groups in the community.

We will await the final recommendations of the Local Government Review Panel and the NSW Government response.

However, a range of transport actions will address the challenges facing transport disadvantaged communities within the Western region.

Actions to support travel for remote communities include:

- Develop a sustainable model for community transport
- Ensure adequate community transport services are provided
- Improve the integration of community transport services into the passenger transport system
- Continue to deliver the Regional Transport Coordination Program.



FUNDING COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

The NSW Government is committed to providing community transport services where they are needed most across NSW.

We have allocated \$7.5 million in 2013-14 to Community Transport services across the state to ensure regional areas and transport disadvantaged people in NSW have the opportunity to access vital transport services.

There are several funding sources for community transport. The range of community transport programs are:

Home and Community Care

This program provides community care services to frail aged and younger people with disabilities and their carers. It is a national program, with the costs shared between the Australian and state governments.

Community Transport Program

The Community Transport Program is funded by the NSW Government and aims to address transport disadvantage at the local level primarily by promoting efficient use of transport resources that exist within the community.

The Community Transport Program targets people whose access to mainstream transport services is limited by physical, social or geographical factors.

The following criteria are used in determining eligibility for services:

- People whose physical health status renders them with a permanent or temporary mobility disability that leaves them unable to use conventional transport systems
- People who live in villages of less than 500 people that do not have access to conventional transport systems
- People who need to access community facilities and resources, which are not available within the hours when conventional public transport operates

- People who meet the eligibility criteria and are also eligible for HACC services may be provided with assistance through the CTP if the HACC Program is unable to meet their needs.

Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme

Transport for NSW administers annual rounds of the Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CPTIGS), which provides support funding to projects that improve the amenity of passenger transport infrastructure for rural, regional and remote communities of NSW.

Examples of projects delivered in the Western region under this scheme include:

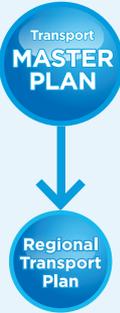
- Bus shelter installations at Girilambone and Coolabah
- Bus terminal upgrade at Brewarrina
- Taxi shelter at Walgett CBD
- Warren Shire bus shelter enhancements
- Vanges Park bus shelter, Nyngan
- Broken Hill Bus Shelter Installation Project - upgraded six Bus Stops by installing shelters.

Local government, incorporated community groups, transport operators and other interested organisations with a current Australian Business Number can apply.

To be successful the proponents must demonstrate the proposal:

- Would benefit non-private vehicle, rural and regional transport passengers
- Is financially and economically sound and has sufficient community support
- Can be part-funded or materially contributed to by other parties
- Is likely to obtain relevant approvals, especially local government





- There is adequate capacity to design, deliver and maintain the infrastructure
- The proposal overall is credible and comprehensive.

We will continue to develop partnerships between federal, state, regional and local transport providers in order to identify opportunities, service improvements and service delivery models that benefit the wider community.

Action: Develop a sustainable model for community transport

We will work with local organisations, councils and the Australian government to ensure the long term viability of the community transport sector.

The limited population base and long distances for travel means that the model of community transport that operates successfully throughout the rest of NSW is difficult to translate to the Western region.

We will investigate alternative community transport service options to ensure an appropriate level of service is provided in an operationally sustainable manner throughout the Western region.

We will investigate options that allow the transport task to be carried out by the providers who are best placed to do so, regardless of transport mode.

Action: Ensure adequate community transport services are provided

We will continue to work with community transport providers to ensure that future demand for community transport can be met.

The ageing population of the Western region is likely to increase future demand for community transport services. Combined with the isolation of many communities in the Western region, this means that we need to provide adequate services with access to services and facilities across the region.

Across NSW, community transport organisations meet the needs of transport disadvantaged groups in the community. We support the following community transport projects in Western region:

- Western Plains (Nyngan and districts) Community Transport – servicing Bogan, Brewarrina, Cobar, Coonamble, Bourke, Lightning Ridge and Walgett
- Far West HACC Services – covering Broken Hill and the unincorporated area of NSW
- Warren Community Transport
- Ivanhoe Community Transport
- Ngangana Community Transport
- Wilcannia Community Access Bus
- Menindee Community Access Bus.

These projects are supported by Regional Transport Coordinators who are employed directly by Transport for NSW.

Action: Improve the integration of community transport services into the passenger transport system

We will work to better integrate community transport services into the overall transport system to more efficiently meet a broader range of needs.

This will strengthen the integration of the planning of all transport services, and focus on the best service for each component of the transport task.

Existing regulatory arrangements have historically impeded efficiency by placing restrictions on taxis and community transport operators. We will work with the industry and operators to investigate opportunities for regulatory reform.

We will focus on enhancing coordination, where necessary, between community transport providers.

Dedicated community transport coordinators will continue to identify areas where unmet demand exists and improve efficiency of current community transport services. This may include consideration of, for example:

- How community transport and taxis can integrate with TrainLink rail and coach services to improve community accessibility to these services
- Opportunities for community transport and taxis to form part of the Broken Hill town bus service
- Opportunities for community led initiatives to provide demand responsive transport services in and around population centres such as Cobar, Coonamble and Bourke.

Regional Transport Coordination Program

We will continue to deliver the Regional Transport Coordination Program to help address the needs of customers experiencing transport disadvantage.

Regional Transport Coordinators aim to reduce transport disadvantage through improved coordination with community stakeholders, transport operators and other agencies. Regional Transport Coordinators are in place for the Far West and Orana areas of the Western region.

An Aboriginal Project and Liaison Officer has the responsibility for identifying issues and providing advice and assistance to improve transport outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The officer works closely with all the Transport Coordinators to identify shortfalls and inconsistencies in transport related issues that predominately affect Aboriginal people.

Transport for NSW is currently trialling a new project to help Aboriginal people in NSW attend funerals of family or community members if they are unable to travel by other means. Transport will usually be for groups of eight or more travelling in the same vehicle to a funeral which is being held at least 25 kilometres away. Assistance may also be provided for people travelling by public transport.



IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

An Implementation and Delivery Plan will be developed to support this Regional Transport Plan.

This will provide the detail to inform how the Regional Transport Plan is being delivered.

As well as the Implementation and Delivery Plan, the NSW Government will continue to invest in transport infrastructure as part of our ongoing investment program.

Investing in the region

Delivering improvements to transport will require sustained investment. This investment will come from the NSW Government, from local councils and from the Australian Government in major projects.

Transport for NSW will continue to work in partnership with local government and the Australian Government on delivering transport improvements.

Delivering for the region

The *Western Regional Transport Plan* supports the *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan*, released in December 2012.

The *Western Regional Transport Plan* is as much about planning and investing for the long term as it is about short term action. Work is already underway and detailed planning and design on many of these projects has already commenced. In addition, we will continue to work to identify and prioritise actions for the future, so that they may be delivered as funding becomes available.

The NSW Government is working hard to ensure that our regional land use and transport plans are aligned, ensuring the greatest benefit from our investment and for our transport customers.

Taking action

Consistent with the *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan*, Transport for NSW will focus on delivering the Western Regional Transport Plan.

This focus on delivering the planning will include:

- Providing an annual update of the Regional Transport Plan including detailed reports on the progress of implementing the initiatives contained in this plan
- Reviewing the Regional Transport Plan every five years
- A commitment to ensure decisions are founded on a solid evidence base
- Continued collaboration with local councils, Regional Development Australia and other stakeholders to support delivery of the Regional Transport Plan and to respond to future planning needs
- A commitment to extensive community engagement and customer consultation as we develop the initiatives in the Regional Transport Plan.



WE LISTENED

Our commitment to customers involves listening to people in the Western region. The feedback we have includes the extensive consultation that informed the *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* and from direct customer feedback through the Regional Household Travel Survey pilot.

NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan

More than 1,200 submissions were received during the development of the *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan* including specific submissions identifying transport issues in the Western region.

A Regional Forum was held on the 28 February 2012 in Broken Hill with over 50 members of the community in attendance following the release of the *NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan Discussion Paper*.

In addition, meetings were held with local, state and Australian government representatives during 2013.

Specific suggestions were made throughout this consultation process to improve transport within the Western region, included:

- Seal roads so that there is all-weather access for both light and heavy vehicles. This is needed for industry and to attract essential services to the smaller towns
- Build a haulage/bypass road around Broken Hill to minimise trucks driving through town
- Improve rail services to Broken Hill
- Build an intermodal hub to encourage greater utilisation of rail freight
- Invest royalties from mining industry into local transport infrastructure
- Upgrade Broken Hill Airport
- Consider relocating some Government departments or branches to Broken Hill to diversify the town which is currently reliant on mining.

REGIONAL HOUSEHOLD TRAVEL SURVEY PILOT

In 2012, Transport for NSW undertook a Regional Household Travel Survey Pilot to help us understand what influences the transport decisions of people in the regions.

This survey was a pilot with a relatively small sample size. However, the results provide insight that informed this plan.

In the Western Region, the top three reasons for travel were social and recreational trips (26 percent), shopping (22 percent) and trips serving a passenger (23 percent).









For more information, visit www.transport.nsw.gov.au

