

SOUTH EAST AUSTRALIAN TRANSPORT STRATEGY INC.



Executive Officer John Duscher

NSW Government- Transport For NSW

20th March 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

SEATS Response to Freight & Ports Plan

South East Australia Transport Strategy Inc. (SEATS) welcomes the opportunity of responding to the NSW Freight and Ports Plan which will support the NSW Future Transport 2056 Strategy.

The Plan identifies key priorities to deliver a more efficient freight system and contains actions and future directions by Government and Industry to move goods in an efficient, safe and economically sustainable manner.

The Plan proposes :

- continuation of investment in road/rail infrastructure to provide greater access for freight on networks, improve connectivity and access.
- create intelligent transport networks that will enable efficient, flexible and dynamic service delivery with improved safety
- pursing national standards for the road infrastructure systems and regulatory frameworks.
- reforming road and rail and maritime regulations across borders.
- promoting first and last mile nodes that are safe, sustainable and efficient from the farm gate to urban centres.
- pursing opportunities to provide dedicated rail networks for freight and passengers.
- investigating key arterial roads and country branch lines to better connect regional centres.

*SEATS believes this is a solid platform to build on the achievements of the previous strategy which saw a significant investment from the Government on the upgrade of roads, bridges and rail and identified the importance and real benefits of corridor planning. Important outcomes were delivered through this investment, development of policy, progress on state and national reform, investigation into new technologies and the development of partnerships between Government and Industry. But with the freight task widely tipped to at least double by 2031 and triple by 2050 the work has just begun. The population of Greater Sydney is expected to reach 8 million over the next 40 years and Regional areas continue to grow so the focus must be on how to develop and manage a transport system that can deliver the consumer needs and developing economy. This increase in freight task will remain a big challenge in the metropolitan areas and regional with the freight volume in regional NSW expected to grow significantly. These challenges have identified and now need to be

addressed. SEATS is pleased to be a part of this vital conversation on strategic planning and the identification of priority projects that will assist the development of the best transport system possible.

*SEATS is an independent, cross border regional organisation specifically established over 24 years ago to advocate for the development of transport infrastructure for South East Australia. This group has the advantage of bringing together a strong membership of Councils, Industry, transport bodies, Regional Development, Canberra Airport, NSW Roads and Maritime Services, VicRoads, State Rail Agencies, independent consultants and other partners. Its aim is to stimulate and facilitate investment in transport infrastructure in south eastern NSW, eastern Victoria and the ACT region. It has developed a Strategic Network document which is a comprehensive review of the measures necessary to improve transport and access to Gippsland, Western Port, the Snowy Mountains, Yass Valley Goulburn and Crookwell areas, the Illawarra region, the south coast of New South Wales and the Australian Capital region. SEATS has also determined a series of priority transport infrastructure projects which are non-parochial, regionally strategic to improve the economic base of south eastern Australia. SEATS seeks to ensure that future planning adequately addresses the needs of the regional and rural areas which have limited access to major forms of transport, suffer from inadequate infrastructure planning and expenditure and have limited opportunity to access suitable public transport. It is important that there is a balance in metropolitan and regional projects.

*SEATS was encouraged by the recent launch (19th March 2018) of the 20 Year Infrastructure Plan which included the plan to identify and reserve corridors for future projects to make sure the community, business and industry know where major infrastructure projects are planned and support technological innovation. In the next ten years it has been pledged a safer and more efficient train services on key lines and faster regional rail on key routes between Sydney and Canberra and Wollongong. The commitment of funding for the following is most welcomed:

\$2b Regional Road Freight Corridor Program, \$1b Regional Growth Roads Program, \$500m Fixing Country Roads Program, \$400m Fixing Country Rail Program, \$200m to accelerate the Bridges for the Bush Program and \$300m Regional Tourism and Environment Program. These programs go a long way to address some of the limitations that are critical gaps in the supply chain. Many of these roads and bridges in particular were built in another era for smaller vehicles with smaller loads and these upgrades are needed to ensure the networks remain efficient, accessible and safe and able to meet the future needs as communities and the growing economy.

National, State and local roads need to be fit for purpose and capable of carrying goods efficiently using high productivity vehicles. Whilst some freight can be moved by rail the majority will be destined to move on the road network at this stage. Heavy Vehicle efficiency and impact when considering B-double and larger vehicles provides compelling discussion and decisions on regulation, access, safety and community expectations. SEATS acknowledges the progress made but there is certainly a long way to go including the harmonising of regulations across borders and within regions. "One set of rules" is vital for economic sustainability, efficiencies and safety. These cross-border issues have been identified many times over by the transport operators and now certainly need to be addressed. SEATS supports the transport regulatory reform that will drive economic efficiency, improve safety and reduce red tape. Again SEATS and Councils have advocated strongly for upgrades to meet the needs of these larger vehicles along the Princes Highway and Kings Highway, including the provision of sealed road shoulders, bypasses, additional overtaking lanes, the realignment of sections of the road, bridge upgrades and rest areas. These have been

incorporated into the corridor planning and strategies developed by RMS who have been very proactive and reflect the high level investment of the NSW Government.

*The Princes Highway Corridor serves as the main transport corridor providing freight and passenger movements to and from the Illawarra and South Coast regions, supports the South Coast tourist travel demands and connects towns. This area is not serviced by rail, has limited air freight transport and has limited access to a port. The region is totally reliant on the road network which is falling behind in planning and funding for major upgrade. Freight movement is a major consideration for planning and funding of transport infrastructure but is only one factor that needs to be considered. The Corridor Strategy prepared by Transport for NSW in 2016 sets out the plans to manage and guide the development of the road corridor to improve safety, traffic efficiency and sustainability. It also points out that with the expected population increase and increase in freight task over the next 20 years there can be an expected drop in “levels of service” as light and heavy vehicle traffic volumes increase. Remedial works will need to be done. Therefore great priority needs to be given to the Princes Highway into the future. As the Strategy points out the Princes Highway provides a connection between the towns of the lower Illawarra and South Coast to Wollongong and Sydney to the north and Victoria to the South, a freight link connecting the lower Illawarra and the South Coast to Port Kembla, Wollongong and Sydney, connection to key road corridors including Illawarra Highway, Braidwood-Nowra Road, Kings Highway and Snowy Mountains Highway, a route for inter-regional business, tourism and leisure travel and local access to jobs, shops, education, community services, health care and tourism facilities within towns and centres. The report also set out objectives, performance and future challenges and the Governments strategy for managing the corridor long term. The Government has indicated what it intends to do to increase the capacity of the networks and deliver effective solutions to the challenges. These challenges included maintaining a safe, stable traffic flow in urban centres along the corridor and manage this in peak seasonal times, providing access for high productivity vehicles for the entire corridor, address the issues of road alignment, pavement and width, improving road safety, balancing the demand of local and through traffic with urban amenity and addressing the issue with delays through accidents, natural events like flooding and the failure of vital infrastructure. As some local and regional roads may be unsuitable for some high productivity vehicles the NSW Government also needs to work with local government to improve “last mile/first mile” of freight routes to HML standard. Other challenges include the reservation of road and rail freight corridors through the planning process and ensuring sufficient land is available for intermodal and warehousing in the future. Again it is pleasing to note the investigation and development of a number of intermodals and “inland ports” in the current and proposed Freight and Ports Plan. These strategically placed hubs will become even more important as the freight task increases and they should be a priority.

SEATS recently launched a Petition to the Federal Government drawing attention to the poor condition of some parts of the Princes Highway network and the need for urgent and on-going funding. SEATS in this petition requested the official recognition as a Highway of National Importance under “The National Land Transport Network Act 2014” and is seeking the full support of the NSW Government in this advocacy. Further funding is certainly needed to build and strengthen the network and address some of the remaining impediments in the supply chain.

*The Kings Highway due to many of the constraints of the Princes Highway has become an even more important east-west link access to Canberra and Sydney via Goulburn and the Hume Highway. Substantial planning and funding is required to bring this corridor to the standard it needs to be. It’s economic and social importance cannot be overstated. SEATS believes there should be further investigation and investment in this east-west link as access

to Canberra Airport becomes more important as the facility develops. The importance of Canberra as a global city needs to be recognised. There needs to be major service improvements to link Canberra with Wollongong, Nowra and Queanbeyan. With the growth of Eden Port as a tourism and freight centre a full review of the Princes Highway between Batemans Bay and Eden should also be conducted as soon as possible, with the view of addressing the impediments and increasing the opportunities for the area. It is pleasing to see the development of this strategically located port which has received financial and planning assistance from both the NSW and Federal Governments. Upgrades of the connection south to Victoria needs to be addressed urgently as part of the economic development of the South Coast and tourist promotion (Sydney-Melbourne Coastal Drive). Other significant roads linkages works requiring attention include the completion of the Main Road 92, connecting the Princes Highway, South Nowra to Hume Highway and Canberra, Milton & Ulladulla bypass, Nowra bypass, completion of major bridge works over the Shoalhaven River.

*The Future Transport Strategy 2056 has a clear focus on safety to be built into all networks, including the provision of Safe Systems approach. Again SEATS applauds these principles which need to be embedded across the strategy and all supporting plans. SEATS also supports the introduction and development of new technologies that will reduce freight costs, increase efficiencies and impacts. Technology innovation as part of a partnership between industry and government will change the demand for freight and makes the best use of resources and assets.

*SEATS firmly supports an increased investment in Rail and believes it is a priority which will relieve pressure on road use and increase the capacity of the major ports. There is certainly a strong focus on rail in the draft paper, “ more freight on rail” and “a shift in economic environment and in technology environment”. This will help manage the growth in truck movement volumes as well as meeting community expectations for safety and amenity in residential areas. It is encouraging to see targets set to increase rail traffic and the development of intermodal terminals will be essential to achieving these targets. There will need to be increased access for freight and passenger services and regulatory changes that will bring about greater efficiencies in time and volumes transported. To move freight in and around Greater Sydney longer passing loops are needed. Further planning is essential to improve services and again it is vital to identify alternative rail corridors and reserve them for the future. Whilst there is believed to be sufficient rail capacity in the short to medium term it is vital that in the long term improved rail freight access to Port Kembla will be required. The delivery of containers will continue to have a significant impact on road and rail freight delivery systems. The use of rail shuttles from Ports to Inland terminals would reduce road congestion and increase efficiencies. These require dedicated rail links or guaranteed high levels of access to rail links from the container ports to intermodal freight terminals. Some ideal locations have been lost due to poor land use decisions in the past. Planning needs to look beyond the immediate site of ports and look at the bigger picture to include inland links. Connection to the Inland Rail is considered essential in the future.

*SEATS members have identified the following projects in NSW as being of vital importance to south east Australia. They have broad regional, interstate and national significance economically and socially. These were included in the previous submission but are worth highlighting again.

Rail links

Main Sydney to Melbourne rail corridor
Bomaderry to Sydney rail corridor
Moss Vale to Sydney rail corridor

Canberra to Goulburn

Road links

(a) Freight Corridors

Hume Highway (Sydney-Melbourne)
Barton Highway
Federal Highway
Princes Highway including M1 Motorway
Picton Road (Wollongong to Hume Highway)
M1 Motorway/Masters Road/Springhill Road from Gwynneville to Port Kembla Port
Illawarra Highway (Albion Park Rail to Hume Highway)
MR92 (Princes Highway at Nowra to Nerriga)
Kings Highway
Tumut to Hume Highway at South Gundagai
Monaro Highway
Snowy Mountains Highway (Bega to Hume Highway)
Imlay Road (Forestry Road) (linking Eden Port to Bombala)

(b) Tourist Routes

Moss Vale Road (Nowra North to Moss Vale)
Brindabella Road (Tumut to Canberra)
Kosciusko Road and The Alpine Way (Cooma to Thredbo)

Port links

Port Kembla
Eden

Intermodal Terminal links

Port Kembla (road, rail, sea)
Moss Vale (road, rail / enterprise zone)
Hume Highway Distribution Centres (Yass, Albury)
Goulburn (road, rail)
Tarago (road, rail - currently waste only)
Eden (road, sea)
Wagga Wagga (road, rail)
Cootamundra (road, rail)
Canberra Airport

In summary, the previous Freight and Ports Plan did a pretty good job but now it's time to move on. With the expected freight task increase the Government and its partners will need to work hard to develop and support an efficient freight system as well as meeting community expectations for safety and amenity. There are impediments to greater use of higher productivity vehicles and other challenges that will need to be addressed. The new plan is strategically very solid and is a sound opportunity to develop partnerships between government and industry to identify and achieve better freight outcomes. There are clear

objectives and performance based targets. It is a good time for reform and to set a vision that can be achieved in the short to medium and long term. Whilst the growth in population is largely centred in and around Greater Sydney much of the industry and infrastructure that supplies our economy is located in rural and regional areas. This road and rail infrastructure is facing considerable pressure because of the rapid growth in demand. SEATS welcomes the opportunity to be a part of the review of the system and the proposals that will guide any improvements through the Freight and Ports Plan. We are keen to contribute positively to the process and continue to work with you, industry and the communities to support your commitment and achieve the important priority outcomes.

Yours faithfully,

John Duscher
Former SEATS Executive Officer