



28 March 2018

Reference No: F06006 - 18/48624

NSW Freight and Ports Strategy Team
Transport for NSW
Submission Portal

Subject: Submission – Draft NSW Freight and Ports Plan

Blue Mountains City Council (the Council) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments in relation to the draft NSW Freight and Port Plan as part of the consultation process.

The Council strongly supports the objectives of the Plan which is to provide a broad framework proposed to deliver improved network efficiencies, capacity and sustainability for the network.

The issue of freight movements in the Blue Mountains is highly contentious and requires careful consideration to secure the highest possible standards of road safety, rail compliance and amenity for all road users, residents and the environment. As a result, Council continues to advocate for an increased use of rail freight, particularly to transport bulk products such as coal, gravel and fuel.

There is clearly a need for both State and Federal Government commitment to transport planning and investment that will overcome the current ad-hoc transport network that is yet to provide the infrastructure needed for the 21 century.

Importantly, the Council believes that as a peri urban area, its importance to the freight network has not been properly considered, with the focus being primarily Sydney centric.

The Blue Mountains City Council submission on the *Draft NSW Freight and Ports Plan* is enclosed for your consideration.

Yours Faithfully

Glenn Sherlock
Program Leader Transport and Infrastructure Planning

Draft NSW Freight and Ports Plan

Blue Mountains City Council Submission – 28 March 2018

Blue Mountains City Council (the Council) wishes to present the following points for consideration as part of the consultation process for the *Draft NSW Freight and Ports Plan*.

The Council strongly supports the objectives of the Plan which is to provide a broad framework proposed to deliver improved network efficiencies, capacity and sustainability for the network.

Blue Mountains

In November 2000, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area was incorporated on the World Heritage List. The Greater Blue Mountains Area covers a total area of about one million hectares of mostly forested landscape on a sandstone plateau, 60 to 180 kilometres inland from central Sydney (inland from Wollongong to Newcastle). The City of Blue Mountains has a population of 78,000 and is one of only two cities in the world that is wholly contained within a designated World Heritage Area.

The City's location within a World Heritage Area places responsibilities on the community, the Council and other agencies to ensure that impacts of urban development are carefully managed and that the internationally recognised values of this natural environment are protected. The Blue Mountains attracts millions of visitors from throughout the world to its magnificent environment, making it one of the top five tourist destinations in Australia. It is the only World Heritage Area in Australia readily accessible by public transport from a major capital and Sydney airport, the main point of entry for most international visitors to Australia.

Freight and Transport Corridors

The Council is particularly concerned that the strategic importance of key transport corridors through the Blue Mountains have not been acknowledged or recognised in the Draft Plan. The Blue Mountains Local Government Area (LGA), one of only two cities in the world that is wholly contained within a designated World Heritage Area, has within its boundaries three significant transport corridors: the Great Western Highway, which is further identified as a Road of National Importance (RONI); Bells Line of Road; and the Western Railway Line. In particular, the two roads provide the only direct vehicular connection between metropolitan Sydney and the Central West.

These transport corridors place pressures and impacts on the local Blue Mountains community and the natural environment and yet they also provide essential links for the Blue Mountains community, allowing access to local services along their routes and to employment and specialist services outside the City.

These transport corridors provide essential conduits for access relating to:

- Trade markets in the Sydney Basin, Regional NSW and interstate;
- Passenger services in the Sydney Basin, Regional NSW and interstate which services commuters and general travellers;
- Major linkages with the National Land Transport Network;
- Country Link Rail Network; and
- Rail Freight Networks.

A truly integrated and sustainable transport system for the state of NSW should identify the significant transport planning challenges associated with the presence of

three important corridors through a highly constrained physical and social environment, namely the urban area contained along key ridgelines within the Greater Blue Mountains WHA.

General

Australia's freight is worth \$66 billion to the NSW economy. Freight in Greater Sydney is expected to double over the next 40 years and increase by 25% in Regional NSW over the same period. There has been evidence in previous reports that a tripling of freight movements by 2050 is forecasted. With the Great Western Highway, Bells Line of Road and the Western Railway Line being three of the key freight routes servicing the Sydney basin, all of which are already severely congested, managing this growth is a real concern to the community and the Council.

Council proposes the following objectives to manage the current and future growth for freight movements:

Rail

The rail network should be the highest priority. The Draft Plan should provide:

- Rail infrastructure to allow for the transfer of freight from road to rail;
- Inter modal facilities located on the fringe of Sydney Basin such as Penrith, Bathurst, Parkes and Dubbo;
- Dedicated rail lines to allow greater separation of passenger and freight services;
- Decentralisation of State and Commonwealth Government Departments;
- The expansion of the noise abatement programs and ability of agencies to undertake enforcement;
- Maintenance of rail infrastructure and rolling stock;
- Rail subsidies for bulk mining extracts, agricultural and fuel products;
- Reopening of essential grain lines in Western NSW;
- Completion of the Maldon to Dombarton rail link;
- Replacement of rolling stock;
- Line duplication between Penrith - St Mary and Strathfield - Central; and
- Additional both ways signalling as illustrated at Springwood and Valley Heights to allow passenger and freight trains to pass.

Road

The Council considers the upgrade of the Great Western Highway west of Katoomba to Mt Victoria as being a high priority in dealing with the current and expected tripling of freight movements by 2050.

The extension and upgrade of the following major roads in the Sydney basin should also be a high priority:

- Provide connections between the orbital road system of F3, M2 and M7;
- Connection to the new 'Aerotropolis';
- Improved North South connections; and
- Dedicated freight lanes on major roads.

Other priority issues are:

- Increased network for High Mass Limit Vehicles and High Productivity Vehicles;
- Monitoring and enforcement of heavy vehicle fleets, particularly compliance with driving hours, weights and driver behaviour;
- The expansion of the noise abatement programs and ability of agencies to undertake enforcement;

- Priority lanes on major roads;
- Strategic road pricing, particular for heavy vehicles;
- The use of innovation vehicles under the National Performance Based Standards scheme to provide greater efficiency and safety outcomes; and
- Support for the delivery of the “Respect...Our Code on Blue Mountains Roads” Heavy Vehicle Drive Neighbourly Agreement with the trucking community and road authorities.

Rest Areas

The Council is of the strong view that there need to be actions relating to Vehicle Rest Areas for the Great Western Highway. These facilities are important in managing driver fatigue as well as providing facilities for refreshment, toilet, fuel, load adjustment or addressing maintenance issues that can arise on route.

Land Use Planning

The Council would like the following land use planning matters to be considered:

- The planning and development for improved access for distribution of goods should be a high priority for all new land releases; and
- Greater interagency relations to ensure transport planning is integrated and reinforces the objectives of land use strategies and planning instruments; and

Funding for Future Transport Investment

The Council suggest that consideration be given to the following options as ways of funding the actions in the Draft Plan:

- Government loans;
- Road pricing schemes;
- Parking levies;
- Vehicle type/function; and
- Destination/congestions tax

Summary

The issue of freight movements in the Blue Mountains is highly contentious and requires careful consideration to secure the highest possible standards of road safety, rail compliance and amenity for all road users, residents and the environment.

A truly integrated and sustainable transport system for the state of NSW would identify the significant transport planning challenges associated with the presence of three important corridors through a highly constrained physical and social environment, namely the urban area contained along key ridgelines within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. In particular, the length of these transport corridors, at over 100km of key rail and road assets along a narrow and physically constrained corridor, represents potential for serious disruption of services and supply. Threats such as land slip, tree fall and bushfire on the sustainability of supply of services to and from the metropolitan Sydney area to the Central West are significant and should be expressly considered in the Freight and Ports Plan.