



Rail, Tram and Bus Union

Submission to the Queensland Government's Draft State Infrastructure Plan (SIP)

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1. Executive Summary

The RTBU supports the broad principles outlined in the Draft SIP. Our primary concern, however, is that the strategy does not adequately indicate how trade-offs between competing priorities will be managed. In short, the strategy includes worthy objectives, but should be more specific about the way decisions around infrastructure investments will be made.

Furthermore, we believe the Draft SIP needs to place a stronger emphasis on the need for investment in, and greater use of, sustainable transport modes such as rail and public transport.

The demographic and transport use projections clearly show that major investment is needed in public transport infrastructure and services, however the program outlined in the Draft SIP is heavily weighted towards road projects.

The RTBU strongly supports the Draft SIP's focus on value capture as a mechanism for funding transport infrastructure projects. We believe the proposed Value Capture Unit will position the Queensland Government as the most innovative state government in the country when it comes to infrastructure funding.

The RTBU believes the Draft SIP could be improved by:

- adopting an evidence-based Multi Criteria Analysis process for prioritising infrastructure projects, taking into account the broader government objectives and priorities;
 - seeking a formal commitment and funding from Infrastructure Australia to upgrade the entire North Coast Line (NCL) as a key component of Australia's east coast rail network, and as part of developing a national land freight transport;
 - including a forward program of investment in strategically-located intermodal terminals to assist in the efficient movement of freight around the State;
 - including a program of level crossing removals, focusing on the removal of high-use level crossings in urban areas and major regional centres; and
 - moving beyond the 15-year planning timeframe, with the program to be based on three planning horizons -
 1. Short-term, 1-4 years (committed and funded projects);
 2. Medium-term, 5-10 years (ready to proceed based on the appropriate need trigger); and
 3. Long-term, 20-40 years (identified in planning and strategy documents).
- including a commitment to conduct comprehensive research into best practice active transport design principles that promote seamless connectivity, and to progressively implement such standards;
 - including a program of investment in DDA compliant infrastructure at transport nodes;
 - incorporating the strategy and projects previously identified in regional transport plans such as Connecting SEQ2031, and identifying targets for modal share;

2. Introduction

This submission and response to the draft State Infrastructure Plan will focus on transport Infrastructure and particularly Rail and Public Transport (PT) issues.

The RTBU is concerned that governments across Australia, and over a number of decades, have focused on investing in road based transport infrastructure at the expense of rail and public transport. This road-based focus has been driven largely by an ideological bias towards private transport over public transport. This bias has been exacerbated in recent years by the particular ideological obsession of the Federal Coalitions Government – most famously expressed by former Prime Minister Tony Abbott when he declared:

“We have no history of funding urban rail and I think it's important that we stick to our knitting.”

The dilemma for State Governments in the current political and economic environment is whether or not to break-free of the infrastructure priorities set for them by the Federal Government – knowing that the Federal Government controls the purse strings. Nevertheless, the final Queensland State Infrastructure Plan must be consistent with addressing the emerging challenges and meeting the desired policy objectives as stated by the Queensland Government. The selection of transport infrastructure projects should be focused on delivering the transport options that will be needed by Queenslanders, and will support a successful modern economy.

The RTBU calls on the Queensland Government to take the opportunity to rebalance the transport infrastructure funding by investing in Rail and Public Transport to move people and freight around the state.

3. Part A – Strategy

3.1 Demographic Projections and Transport Use

As the SIP points out (see Part A, p14), forecast demographic changes will see the State's population rise, and the proportion of older people increase.

“From a population of 4.7 million, Queensland is expected to grow to 7 million by 2036, and reach 10 million by 2061. Most of this growth will be in South East Queensland (SEQ) and some coastal centres. Along with economic activity, the fundamental driver for infrastructure demand is population growth, therefore demand for future infrastructure is likely to be greater in areas where growth is expected to be highest.” (Part A, p 14)

Governments will need to anticipate, plan and invest in adjusting to these emerging trends. With transport infrastructure there will be road network and public transport implications that are predictable, including:

- An 121% increase in the number of trips taken by public transport; and
- A 43% increase in the number of road trips.

As these figures show, the most pronounced increase will be in terms of public transport use. The provision of new public transport infrastructure and expanded public transport services therefore should be a key priority of the SIP.

Regional Road Networks

Changing demographics will potentially change travel behaviour in Australia, for example with an increasing number of post-retirement “Grey Nomads” drive tourism on regional road networks. This trend in “drive tourism” will contribute to increased road accidents and effect transit times for road freight vehicles, with consequential demands on Government to increase investment on major Highways like the Warrego and Bruce Highways. This will particularly be the case if B-Triples are approved to operate on these highways.

Public Transport Implications

The demographic forecasts show that Queenslanders are living longer - this will lead to other mobility and accessibility challenges that may create transport disadvantage and social exclusion if future infrastructure isn't designed to take into account and cater for these emerging changes and factors.

Factors and changes that will need to be considered in the design of public transport infrastructure must include improved seamless connectivity at transport nodes. It will be important to cater for increasing proportion of PT users who will have mobility limitations and will need to access lifts and ramps, rather than use stairs.

Increased throughput capacity of DDA compliant transport infrastructure will be therefore required. Over time an increasing number of the aging population cohort will become more and more reliant on Public Transport. Many will choose to drive cars less once they reach their advanced years and will therefore need greater access to public transport.

3.2 Climate Change and Transport

Transport activity is a significant contributor to carbon and greenhouse emissions, which in turn contributes to climate change. Rail and public transport is significantly more energy efficient than road freight and private vehicles. Initiatives and infrastructure that promote and facilitate more freight on rail, and more public transport patronage, will therefore contribute to a reduction in Queensland's carbon emissions.

A switch to more energy-efficient transport modes will also have a positive economic impact: reducing Queensland's reliance on imported fuels, and reducing the risk associated with interruptions to the fuel supply chain or spikes in global fuel prices.

Rail transport involves lower externalities than road, therefore any further increased transport of freight by road will lead to continuing road trauma, congestion and increased pollution and greenhouse emissions which degrade liveability and amenity.

3.3 Benefits of Public and Active Transport

Transport policies have a major impact on public health outcomes. Road-dominated strategies inevitably lead to increased car use and lower levels of walking, cycling and public transport use. This, in turn, reduces the amount of incidental physical activity in our daily lives. Ultimately, road-focused transport policies can create a vicious cycle where pedestrians and cyclists are intimidated by rising traffic volumes and switch back to driving cars, leading to even more traffic and more disincentives to use sustainable modes. Conversely, public transport improves social engagement, social interaction and inclusion - outcomes that are consistent with the overall goals of the Draft SIP.

Active Transport Design Standards

The RTBU encourages the Queensland Government to conduct comprehensive research into best practice active transport design principles that promote seamless connectivity, and to progressively implement such standards. Such best practice design standards would need to take into account the need to provide attractive, seamless connectivity with dedicated walkways and bicycle paths that are the most direct route, rather than designing infrastructure with the most direct route that favours the private motor cars and powered transport options.

The Active Transport Design Standards should include;

- Footpaths with flat surfaces with minimal inclines, slopes and grades with most direct access routes on firm stable and slip resistant surfaces with minimum joints and which are visually uniform and attractive;
- Utility covers and grates that do not create safety trip points, particularly noting that we have an aging population with increasing mobility issues that have to be taken into account;
- Principles such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED); and
- The importance of adequate shading and light in our sub-tropical climate, and the provision of adequate drinking fountains and seating at regular intervals.

Seamless Connectivity Design Standards

It has been shown that seamless connections between sustainable transport modes, including between walking/cycling and public transport, are important to encouraging greater use of those modes. Connectivity is even more important for people with mobility disadvantages, or parents with prams, who can find poor connectivity to be a major barrier to using public transport.

The RTBU therefore believes that a program of investment in DDA compliant infrastructure at transport nodes should be included within the SIP.

“End of Trip” Facilities

The RTBU believes the State Government should to extend the provision of showers, changing rooms, lockers and bicycle parking “End of Trip” facilities in Government buildings (or organisations who receive government funding), and then seek to extend the provision of these facilities in private sector workplaces.

Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure

The State Government should work with local governments to provide pedestrian facilities and walkable environments around public transport stations and re-examine speed limits in select local streets which are actively used by high volumes of pedestrians near public transport nodes. The development of provision of more direct and attractive walking and cycling facilities - linking transport hubs, rail or bus stations to major destinations – is needed to encourage greater use of sustainable modes. This is particularly needed in the Brisbane CBD. Similarly, greater emphasis should be placed on the provision of connected pathway networks to provide access to local destinations, for example shops and schools amenities.

The RTBU believes there is a clear need for the provision of more dedicated bikeways that are divided from road traffic and pedestrians. Consideration should also be given to the provision of Bikeways with audible warning strips (rumble strips) for protection of bike riders and to prevent incursion of car drivers into cycle lanes. Audible warning strips also could be used for the separation of pedestrians and bike riders where there are common pedestrian and cycle paths.

3.4 Investment in Roads and Induced Demand

The RTBU believes that the Draft SIP fails to recognise the risks associated with a continued focus on road investment and the consequences of induced demand.

Investing in roads has been proven to induce further demand and increased use of motor vehicles, which in turn requires further investment by government. Saturation and congestion on the road network would require Governments to make major investment in upgrading the road network to provide the additional capacity and free up congestion. However a consequence of this approach is that it would result in further induced demand, thereby repeating this unsustainable cycle.

There are many examples of government investment in road upgrades that only resulted in the shifting the congestion and constraint point to another location. One such example in Brisbane is the Kessels & Mains Road intersection upgrade. This project cost almost \$300 million, however in only a year the congestion and bottle neck constraint point had moved to the east to another location at Logan Road intersection at Upper Mount Gravatt, just 1.5km away.

Understanding the implications and consequences of focusing in one mode only - particularly when it's at the expense of the competing mode - is a flawed strategy that undermines modal neutrality. To put it simply, it is important for governments not to put all their eggs in the one basket when it comes to transport infrastructure. This includes planning and appropriately protecting future transport corridors from incompatible development activity to prevent disruption and additional costs to future generations and Governments when the time comes.

3.5 Transport and Land Use Planning

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has had formal responsibility for rail planning since 1994, however in that time the agency has not had the same level of commitment to funding regional rail projects as it has for roads projects.

It is the RTBU's view that TMR is dominated by people whose careers and background are in roads construction, and as such there seems to be little or no interest by TMR bureaucrats and decision makers in promoting rail. Essentially, TMR is an organisation with considerable capability and experience with planning and delivery of road projects, but little appreciation or understanding of the complexity and benefit of rail transport for the movement of people and freight. We believe that this bias within the state's key transport planning and delivery agency needs to be addressed.

3.6 Connecting SEQ2031

The RTBU calls on the Queensland Government to reactivate its commitment to the Connecting SEQ 2031 (CSEQ2031) strategy. Connecting SEQ 2031 was a comprehensive regional transport plan, and should serve as a foundation document for the SIP. Achieving the objectives of CSEQ 2031 are fundamentally dependant on delivering the SEQ Rail Strategy.

CSEQ 2031 states:

“It is clear that it is neither financially nor environmentally sustainable for road traffic to continue to grow at current rates. As such, this is a plan to fundamentally change current transport patterns by:

- *doubling the share of public transport from 7% to 14% of all trips*
- *doubling the share of active transport (such as walking and cycling) from 10% to 20% of all trips,*

- *reducing the share of trips taken in private motor vehicles from 83% to 66%.”*

CSEQ 2031 also states:

“in the longer term it seeks to achieve an increased market share in both bulk and containerised rail freight.”

CSEQ 2031 defines a mode share reduction for private motor vehicles and a doubling of the share of public transport, however it does not define the target for increased market share for containerised general rail freight. It is important, therefore, for the State Government to quantify its targets for rail freight modal share, to enable an assessment of what capacity improvements are needed in the next phase of the rail studies.

3.7 Value Capture Mechanisms

The Draft SIP's proposed Value Capture Unit is a potential game changer for the way transport infrastructure (and particularly public transport infrastructure) projects are funded. Use of value capture methodologies could unlock opportunities for a significant expansion of Queensland mass transit network.

The RTBU supports the creation of the Value Capture Unit, and believes it would make Queensland the most progressive and innovative state in terms of infrastructure funding.

Earlier this year the RTBU commissioned SGS Economics and Planning to prepare a comprehensive report into the potential application of value capture methodologies to Australian infrastructure projects. The resulting report will, we believe, be an extremely useful resource for policy professionals, particularly in respect to determining whether or not a planned project is suitable to be funded by value capture methods.

A copy of the research paper is attached.

3.8 Transport Oriented Developments (TODs)

Private sector land use development activity generally moves ahead of government planning and preservation of land required to meet population growth, and the resultant demand and needing to provide infrastructure. There are opportunities to facilitate Transport Oriented Developments (TODs) at locations where there is underutilised (latent) capacity.

3.9 Community Engagement

Effective community engagement is critical to achieving public support for new projects and for changes to the way existing infrastructure is used. For example, the introduction of demand management measures to encourage off-peak travel, or value capture methodologies to help fund new projects, need to be carefully explained to the public.

2. Part B – Program

4.1 Identification of Priorities

The RTBU argues that the Draft SIP appears to be deficient in how or why certain projects are included or why others excluded. It is unclear what criteria and or evaluation occurred to justify and or identify specific transport infrastructure projects for funding ahead of others. In the absence of this criteria and evaluation, the Program element of the Draft SIP is at risk of being perceived as a politically-inspired wish list. The need to for transparency and clarity around the selection of projects is even more important given the apparent disconnect between the big-picture objectives set out in Part A and the program outlined in Part B.

The RTBU would suggest the adoption of an evidence-based multi criteria analysis (MCA) based on achieving the government's policy challenges, desired objectives and outcomes. The MCA evaluation needs to take into account the broader government objectives and priorities as stated in the SIP. The evaluation for all projects should be published - which would be consistent with the commitment to transparency contained in the SIP (*see Part A, p6*)

The Draft SIP makes no specific reference to the State Government's Connecting SEQ 2031 rail and public transport initiatives and priorities. Some of the projects identified in Connecting SEQ 2031 are included in Part B (such as the Beerburrum to Landsborough duplication), but other important rail projects are omitted (such as the Salisbury to Beaudesert rail corridor, North West Transport Corridor, Springfield-Ripley to Ipswich and CAMCOS).

4.2 Freight Infrastructure and the Economy

Relative Decline of Rail Freight

The Draft SIP acknowledges the decline of rail freight on the North Coast Line (NCL), yet there is no specific plan or reference to addressing the declining rail freight modal share, despite the governments stated objective of encouraging more freight on rail.

There is a serious risk involved in not addressing the needs of Queensland's above rail commercial customers. The RTBU can foresee a situation in the not-too-distant future where freight operators currently using rail will increasingly move to more reliable and faster road-based services in order to meet the needs of retail customers. This in turn will drive up to cost of a maintaining the rail network for an ever-diminishing number of above rail services.

At some point if the financial returns or economics for above rail operators continue to decline, the viability of continuing to operate intermodal trains to service regional locations in North Queensland will be in jeopardy.

This presents the potential risk of total and catastrophic collapse of the above rail freight forwarding in Queensland. Such a collapse would have far reaching implications, including a significant modal shift of intermodal freight containers onto the Bruce Highway.

4.3 North Coast Line

The Infrastructure Priority List contained in Part B includes a reference to upgrading the North Coast Line between Beerburrum and Nambour. The RTBU fully supports this upgrade, however we note that this section represents a small fraction of the North Coast Line. The level of investment in the North Coast Line is dwarfed by the investment in the Bruce Highway from both the State and Federal governments. Given that the North Coast Line and the Bruce Highway effectively compete for freight transport, the focus on upgrading road infrastructure will have a significant impact on the freight market for this corridor – with the inevitable loss of market share for rail. Further loss of market share threatens to undermine the viability of rail services on the North Coast Line.

Should these services become unviable, there will be a further modal shift to road transport, and a further need for road upgrades and maintenance expenditure. Furthermore, a complete dependence on road transport along this corridor will leave Queenslanders with greater exposure to potential external shocks in petrol prices or supply. This is because fuel represents a lower cost component of rail transport than it does for road transport. Conversely, the continuance of a competitive rail freight industry will not only reduce the pressure on the Bruce Highway, it would mitigate against the risks to the Queensland economy associated with an exclusive reliance on road transport.

The Draft SIP Program includes a case study outlining a 10-year Action Plan for the North Coast Line. No funding, however, is listed in the rest of the document to implement this Action Plan. Furthermore, the Action Plan has not been fully released, so there is no accountability or transparency around plans for this vital piece of transport infrastructure.

The RTBU recommends that:

- upgrading the North Coast Line from Nambour to Cairns should be a key priority for the Queensland Government and Infrastructure Australia;
- the North Coast Line Action Plan should be fully funded; and
- the North Coast Line Action Plan should be released to the public.

Situational Analysis

In recent years there has been a relative neglect by governments in investment in regional rail infrastructure and upgrades (compared to the massive investment in road infrastructure over the past 20 years). The existing rail networks are still dominated by the legacy of the single track railway that was built to suit the 19th and early 20th Century standards for the “steam age” era, and this legacy limits current train capability, performance and reliability. In the 1990s the Queensland Government invested in improving the NCL with a series of alignment upgrades to remove the worst of the 19th Century alignments, and to improve the axle weights of trains. This investment at least arrested the decline in rail's modal share on the NCL at the time.

However, since the mid 1990s the significantly increased investment in the road network, along with the adoption of Higher Productivity Freight Vehicles and Performance Based Standards, has resulted in the user of heavier and longer trucks with higher fuel efficiency for only a marginal increase in access costs. These improvements have combined to deliver the road industry with a substantial productivity increase, leading to an increased share of general freight in Australia and Queensland. The cumulative infrastructure investment over the years on the Bruce Highway has resulted in a significant improvement in the Bruce Highway in the last 30 years, and with a continuing investment pipeline of \$8.5 Billion

infrastructure upgrades planned for the Bruce Highway. By comparison, the NCL has suffered from Government indifference.

Much of the rail infrastructure on the NCL is becoming near asset life expired infrastructure needing replacement, renewal or upgrading. The NCL covers a distance of 1681 kilometres from Brisbane to Cairns. The section of the NCL corridor from Brisbane to Nambour – which is earmarked for upgrade - is a part of the SEQ passenger network and is 105km long. The Brisbane to Beerburrum section is 65 kilometres of dual track which it shares with passenger services. The next 40 kilometres from Beerburrum to Nambour is predominately single track, with seven crossing loops at the seven stations between Beerburrum and Nambour.

Approximately 90 per cent of the NCL north of Nambour is a single track railway. This presents a number of challenges and constrains to efficient train operations. The availability and positioning of passing locations seriously impact on the movement and frequency of services that can operate at any given section as a result single track sections impose significant operational limitations on the railway. The “single track” limitations are further impacted by the operation of a “mixed railway” on the NCL (that is the operation of various different train type - such as high speed tilt trains, diesel and electric freight services, inter-urban / extended commuter services etc - with differing performance and operational characteristics).

For single line railways, the journey time between passing places is the most significant limiting factor to capacity. Reduction in the distances between passing places and/or higher operating speeds would contribute towards increasing capacity and reliability. Single line operations are far more exposed to unreliability, because a single delay to one train can have a “snowball effect” in delaying other trains. This arises because the first train to be delayed will affect other trains in the opposite direction, as they will have

to wait additionally at passing places for the delayed train. Consequently, their out of schedule running will, in the same way, affect other trains operating in the opposing direction.

RTBU rail operations members are involved in the movement of over 40 north bound general rail freight trains from SEQ to North Queensland coastal centres with the 2 above rail operators (Aurizon and Pacific National Queensland).

On the basis that each of these trains can carry up to 100 Twenty Foot Equivalent containers (TEUs) there are approximately 200,000 loaded containers “north bound” intermodal (TEU container) movements a year on the NCL originating in SEQ. Generally TEU container movements are in both directions, so the total movements would almost be double, due to the repositioning of empty containers back to SEQ for reloading in SEQ or used for back loading generally of produce from the North Queensland. This equates to approximately 400,000 TEU movements per year, or 1,100 TEU's per day on a 24 hour basis.

The implications of the existing rail based SEQ - North Queensland intermodal freight movements shifting on to the road network would be significant. Transferring 400,000 TEU movements per year to road would require an additional 370 B-Doubles movements (assuming there is 3 TEU's per B-Double truck) per day, which would be 15 B-Doubles an hour or about a B-Double every 4 minutes on the Bruce Highway (one in either direction every 8 minutes). In reality, however, the extra trucks would not be evenly distributed over a 24 hour cycle, so the concentration of additional trucks would be considerably greater than this estimate. The consequences would be more and more trucks on the road networks in the inner urban areas around ports, industrial, logistics and warehousing precincts. The existing road network simply wouldn't be able to accommodate the additional transport task without creating a significant deterioration of transit time and reliability.

Because of the importance of the North Coast Line in the state and national economy and its vital role in serving Queensland's coastal communities, there are considerable and quantifiable risks which would result from not addressing the deficiencies detailed in this plan. These are:

- continued deterioration of the rail assets;
- continued loss of freight on rail to road;
- continued decline in rail's competitiveness;
- continued decline in the performance of rail compared to road; and
- loss of reputation by governments deemed responsible for railway maintenance and upgrading.

On the other hand, there is an opportunity to support increased general freight movements north-south along the Queensland coastline to and from Brisbane and interstate markets. NCL is a vital link lifeline to North Queensland where up to 600,000 people are dependent on this vital transport link, which provides general freight (including groceries), and which plays a vital role in serving Queensland's coastal communities and keeping transport cost to the community down. Investment in the NCL will provide a competitive balance to the road transport option of the Bruce Highway. More rail deviations built to modern standards under a Mainline Completion program that would give transit time savings along with improved fuel efficiency for freight and passenger trains. A long-term, 20-40 year development plan for the NCL is needed to bring its performance up to contemporary engineering and safety reliability standards, as well as providing competitive transit time, to secure its future.

The RTBU strongly argues that the Queensland Government and TMR should seek a commitment and funding from Infrastructure Australia to upgrade the entire NCL as a key component of Australia's east coast rail network, and as part of developing a national land freight transport.

This would bring the NCL into the 21st century – arresting the current decline in rail's modal share of freight along the corridor, and set a foundation for rail to grow into the future.

4.4 Inland Rail and Intermodal Terminals

The RTBU strongly supports the development of a new Inland Rail route between Brisbane and Melbourne. We have concerns, however, that the existing proposal does not deliver the step change required to ensure rail freight remains competitive with road transport along this corridor.

Our Union believes the Inland Rail project is one of the most important infrastructure projects to be undertaken in this country since the construction of the Snowy Hydro scheme. The project has the potential to revolutionise the movement of transport north-south for the eastern states, and to contribute significantly to Australia's economic growth and productivity over the next 50 years and beyond.

The RTBU argues that the Inland Rail project should be a top-tier infrastructure priority for the Federal Government, however we also believe the current proposal needs to be re-worked to ensure it delivers a world-class outcome for Australia. The guiding principles for the delivery of Inland Rail should be:

- Inland Rail should be treated as transformational and intergenerational nation building project, delivering 21st Century performance and productivity benefits.
- The journey-time from one end to the other should be under 20 hours, enabling a return train consist to be completed in two days.
- The project should be constructed to North American Class I Railroad standards rather than ARTC mainline standards in order to support modern fast, efficient, high-productivity freight trains.
- The project should begin with the Toowoomba to Brisbane corridor – the section that will deliver the most value to the Queensland and national economy.

The RTBU's full submission to the Federal Government regarding Inland Rail is available on the RTBU National Office website (http://www.rtbu.org.au/inland_rail).

Intermodal Terminals

The importance and the role of Intermodal terminals in the transport supply chain are critical, there is a role for the Queensland Government to plan, facilitate and establish Intermodal Terminals. Intermodal Terminals are vital infrastructure for the movement of general freight and play an important role in the economy. The Draft SIP Program notes that the

“development of multi-modal hubs is critical to improving Queensland's global competitiveness and economic performance.”

The RTBU believes the Draft SIP would be enhanced by the inclusion of a forward program of investment in strategically-located intermodal terminals to assist in the efficient movement of freight around the State.

4.5 Shared Road and Rail Infrastructure Corridors

The RTBU supports the principles outlined in Part A of the Draft SIP regarding the protection of corridors and integrated planning for transport, land-use and economic development along those corridors:

“Ensure regional planning and regional transport planning appropriately protects corridors and combines land-use, infrastructure and economic development planning.” (Part A, p47)

To this end, the RTBU believes the Queensland Government should consider and investigate shared linear infrastructure, particularly transport corridors, and particularly where there are opportunities to minimise overall costs and risks by sharing the property acquisition costs and bulk earth works and civil construction costs.

Level Crossings

Level crossings remain a significant hazard on the Queensland transport network. The Queensland Level Crossing Safety Strategy 2012-2021 states that:

“In Queensland from 2001 to 2011, level crossing incidents accounted for about 25% of all rail fatalities and serious injuries.”

Level crossing safety is a particularly important issue for our Union. Sadly, too many of our members have been involved in level crossing incidents.

The RTBU strongly argues that the SIP should include a program of level crossing removals. This program should focus on removing high-use level crossings in urban areas and major regional centres as a priority.

Burdekin Deviation

The current Burdekin River Bridge just north of Home Hill is an example of share road and rail infrastructure, where the corridor and infrastructure spanning the Burdekin River are shared by road and rail. TMR, however, is currently looking at alternatives for a new Bruce Highway realignment and to secure the corridor for a bypass of the Burdekin townships of Home Hill, Ayr and Brandon as well as the location of a new crossing of the Burdekin River. Despite having planning responsibility for both road and rail planning, the scope of this Burdekin region deviation doesn't include consideration of an adjoining and shared corridor for the Rail NCL. This is a missed opportunity to combine land use and transport infrastructure projects and to apply in practice the principles expressed in the Draft SIP.

Salisbury to Kagaru Corridor

With the Salisbury to Kagaru corridor there is a need for TMR and the Queensland Government to understand the implications and challenges associated with preserving a shared and common corridor from Kagaru to Acacia Ridge (and Salisbury to Clapham). It is important that TMR move quickly to protect the Queensland Government interest ahead of decisions by Inland Rail about requirements.

Salisbury to Beaudesert Proposed Passenger Line

The Salisbury to Beaudesert (initially to Greenbank or Flagstone) passenger corridor study (S2B) is based predominately on the existing Interstate Corridor from Salisbury to Kagaru. This legacy corridor has insufficient width to accommodate both Passenger Services and the ultimate track requirements to support a successful Inland Rail project. This presents a strategic risk and challenge to the Queensland Government to accommodate both desired transport objectives, whilst at the same time preventing any potential cost shifting between the two projects.

The approach to the Inland Rail infrastructure and corridor property requirements will have implications for preserving the S2B passenger options and the associated costs, including significant changes to the existing road network bridges to accommodate the spatial requirements of the two projects in the shared corridor.

4.6 Infrastructure Planning Horizon

The 1-4 Year infrastructure projects in the Draft SIP represent just the committed and funded projects. In the transport area, the listed are predominately road projects, which were subject to substantial funding and prioritisation by the Federal Government.

While the RTBU endorses the rail projects in the 5-15 year horizon, we believe other rail projects in the Connecting SEQ 2013 should be added to the list. Furthermore, these are only opportunities identified as infrastructure projects without any funding commitments.

There is clearly a need to move beyond the 15 year planning horizon

We would suggest that given the importance of planning for the future and the costs arising from failing to protect infrastructure spatial property requirements it is important that the government outlines a longer-term infrastructure planning horizon.

It is noteworthy that the plan contains demographic and growth forecasts (*see Part A, p14*) which projects 21 years ahead and 41 years ahead, so logically the SIP should be identifying and planning for infrastructure over these timeframes as well. This is all the more important given practical experience which shows that land use development activity generally moves ahead of government planning and preservation of land. Similarly, experience has shown that governments incur greater costs and risks when the future requirements are not protected against incompatible development activity. For example, the failure of successive State Governments over many years to plan and protect land for future transport infrastructure has resulted in expensive infrastructure solutions in inner city Brisbane - such as, Clem 7, Legacy Way, and the Airport Link.

20-40 Year Planning Horizons

The RTBU suggests that the SIP should be based on three planning horizons:

1. Short-term, 1-4 years (committed and funded projects);
2. Medium-term, 5-10 years (ready to proceed based on the appropriate need trigger); and
3. Long-term, 20-40 years (identified in planning and strategy documents).

With projects in the long-term horizon, spatial property requirements must be identified in land use planning schemes and protected from incompatible development activity and government disposal. Furthermore, projects that are constructed in the 5-10 planning horizon must be required to make allowance/provision for the long-term infrastructure requirements, to prevent future generations from having to fund costly retro-fits or upgrades.

5. Conclusion

Long-term infrastructure planning is by its nature complicated and difficult. These difficulties are compounded by our political system, which inevitably imposes the short-term demands of the political cycle over the top of long-term decision-making process. That's why most jurisdictions don't even bother with long-term planning – or when they do, it often becomes an exercise in drawing up long wish lists of projects that may or may not ever see the day.

The RTBU commends the Queensland Government for embarking on a serious and comprehensive approach to infrastructure planning. The objectives outlined in the Draft SIP are worthy, and the approach is broadly sound. We do, however, feel that the process can be improved, particularly in terms of establishing a rigorous and transparent methodology around the prioritisation of projects.

Broadly, we also note that there is a marked inconsistency in the Draft SIP between the importance it places on public transport and rail in Part A, and the paucity of public transport and rail projects listed in the Part B. We believe this inconsistency is partly a legacy of a roads bias in infrastructure policy that has been in part created by Federal Government policy priorities, and has also been reinforced by a lack of expertise in public transport and rail issues at departmental level in TMR. There are many reasons why this disconnect must be fixed in the final version of the SIP – such as the importance of public transport and rail to meeting the State Government's economic, social and environmental policy goals.

The Draft SIP notes that the use of public transport is projected to double over the next 20 years. These projections underscore the vital role that public transport will play in the future of Queensland – particularly in regard to managing the projected population growth in South East Queensland. The experiences of Sydney, which has suffered from inadequate investment in public transport infrastructure, and the prioritisation of road projects, must serve as a warning for Queensland, and a cautionary tale about the risks of failing to get transport planning right.

The RTBU wishes to highlight the particular need for major investment in upgrading the North Coast Line. Without urgent attention from the State and Federal Government, this vital piece of transport infrastructure is at risk of becoming commercially uncompetitive and unviable. The collapse of rail freight along the North Coast Line would have significant impacts on the Queensland economy, and would lead to a massive increase of truck traffic on the Bruce Highway.

Finally, the RTBU congratulates the Queensland Government on taking the lead in the development of value capture methodologies to fund new public transport projects. It is vital that governments at all levels seek to find new and innovative ways to fund infrastructure, and value capture offers an important alternative to traditional funding options.



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