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Subject: DRAFT INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

OSCAR welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Sunshine Coast Regional Council's Draft Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS).

When the draft ITS was endorsed at the June Ordinary Meeting of Council a number of key points were made in the documentation presented to Councillors. These included:

- Articulating the Council's vision for the region as "Australia's most sustainable region – healthy, smart, and creative".
- Meeting the multi-modal transport network needs of a growing community and maintaining the environmental, social and economic values of the region are critical outcomes to ensure this vision is achieved.
- Advocating for a "one network" approach, where all levels of Government and the private sector work together to deliver a transport system with community benefits - this includes Council seeking its fair share of investment to deliver catch-up transport infrastructure and services but also to meet the high levels of growth that are forecast.
- Acknowledging that private vehicles will remain the dominant mode of transport on the Coast, however, without a shift in our current mode share, increasing growth and vehicle traffic will impact our region's environment, sustainability and liveability.

The Council needs to be more specific about what it means when it talks about sustainability; too often it is used as a "buzz word" without adequate explanation of it in the context of its usage.

- Proposing mode share targets of reduced car travel from 85% to 70%, increased active travel from 12% to 20% and passenger transport from 2% to 10%; targets that will guide planning and investment of infrastructure and programs to assist a shift to more sustainable modes of travel.

OSCAR endorses these points as worthy aspirational aims. We note however that such strategy documents can be little more than a listing of aspirational goals, actions and projects, presented either under the banner of economic development or with a environmental tinge. Their whole purpose is to present a "vision" which all 3 levels of government say they will work toward, but in

reality none of them can (the Council) or appear prepared to resource (the State and Federal Governments).

We agree that Council has a significant role to play, but acknowledge it is not solely responsible for many aspects of the transport system, such as public transport. Increased State Government investment in the bus and passenger rail network particularly, is critical in creating viable travel alternatives to the car and we are keen to assist the Council in advocating with other levels of government and the developer/business/tourism sectors for such increased investment.

If, as Council says, the State Government is pushing population growth on the SCRC, then the State must fund the necessary infrastructure to cope with this growth. This should be resolved BEFORE new development construction is started.

Key messages

Council has identified the following as key messages from the ITS:

- 1 **Integrated transport system** – An integrated transport system connects communities and supports the growth and productivity of the economy.

Agree.

- 2 **Travel behaviour change** - Increasing travel choice and reducing our overwhelming reliance on the private car are key to achieving the mode shift targets to create a sustainable transport network in the future.

Agree that this is a worthy aspiration to strive for.

- 3 **Advocacy** - Council will continue to provide for community needs, but maintain a vigorous advocacy approach to the State Government, with opportunities for private investment to secure an effective, integrated transport solution for the region, highlighted by light rail and other passenger transport improvements across the region.

We strongly support Council's continued advocacy to State and Federal Governments and to the business community to ensure adequate transport infrastructure for the region.

We believe that Council can in fact do a better job of such advocacy and we are keen to assist with the coordination of community based advocacy to assist Council in its lobbying endeavours.

- 4 **Integrated transport and land use planning** - Land development is required to integrate transport infrastructure networks to connect and carry expected vehicles, walking, cycling and public transport.

Agree.

We believe more pressure needs to be placed on developers to deliver the additional transport infrastructure and services that are needed as a consequence of their developments.

The financial burden of needed infrastructure for future growth should not fall solely on ratepayers already living on the Sunshine Coast.

- 5 **Lifestyle** – Delivering a sustainable transport system will help to maintain our lifestyle advantages and meet the needs of a growing community.

Agree.

- 6 **Roles and responsibilities** - All levels of Government and the private sector have a role to play in the planning, delivery and management of the transport system.

Agree. It is regrettable that the Council cannot secure bi-partisan support for the funding commitments the Sunshine Coast requires, despite its concerted efforts to do so.

The community is sick and tired of the petty partisan antics of both the ALP and the LNP over transport infrastructure funding on the Sunshine Coast.

- 7 **Smart mobility** – Smart mobility and new business models have the potential to revolutionise the mix of transport options and how travel occurs locally and beyond.

Agree that smart mobility and new business models are worthy of pursuit but we do not see these as a particular panacea for the problems we are experiencing.

- 8 **Economy** - The benefits of a coordinated transport infrastructure that better matches capacity of the transport system with major development and growth areas, delivers confidence for investment in the local economy.

Agree.

- 9 **Consultation** - Council is actively listening to the community and is seeking feedback on the Draft Integrated Transport Strategy. Information received during the consultation period will inform discussions with Council, to finalise the Sunshine Coast Regional Council ITS.

Recent events have caused OSCAR to question the Council's commitment to community engagement and particularly its desire/capacity to reflect community views in the decisions it actually makes.

We hope this is not the case with the ITS and we were pleased, given the Draft ITS was not available to the community until almost a week after the Council's decision to proceed with community consultation, that our request to the CEO and subsequently the Group Executive, Built Infrastructure, for an extension to the closing time for submissions was acted on positively and a one week extension was provided.

Priority transport projects

Council has identified 27 priority transport projects that will be essential to providing an efficient, safe and integrated transport system for the Sunshine Coast. Council has also identified its top six priority transport projects as follows:

Mooloolah River Interchange

This is a major choke point on the Sunshine Coast and has become a greater issue since the opening of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. An upgrade to the interchange will reduce congestion on Nicklin Way and the Sunshine Motorway while providing direct and better access to the hospital.

We support this priority but believe our region must not be too car/road centric in its priorities.

North Coast Connect

A business case, being conducted with the support of all three levels of government, will assess the work required to provide faster rail outcomes between Brisbane, Nambour and Maroochydore.

We support this priority.

It needs be acknowledged that certain types of jobs in both the public and private sector will only be available outside of the Sunshine Coast and particularly in Brisbane as a large urban centre and capital city. It is unrealistic to expect that the Coast will ever have the range of jobs that are available in Australia's capital cities and if the time to get to Brisbane under an hour was achieved we would be no worse, in terms of travel time, than many people who live in the outer suburbs of capital cities and much better off than many other areas of regional Australia.

It also needs to be recognised that a fast train operates in both directions! If it was also much quicker to get to the Sunshine Coast from Brisbane it may make it an attractive employment option for people who wish to travel here for work but do not wish to live here. The health precinct developing around the Sunshine Coast University Hospital and the Sunshine Coast International Broadband Submarine Cable Project are both examples where skill shortages, identified by businesses on the Coast as restricting growth, can be met where local deficiencies exist.

North Coast Rail duplication

The duplication of the North Coast Rail Line between Beerburrum and Nambour will improve the reliability, speed and accessibility of rail freight operations and passenger transport services and support close economic and social connections with Brisbane.

We support this priority.

Sunshine Coast Light Rail

Light rail will provide a high-frequency transit solution within the Enterprise Corridor where population and employment growth are expected to increase significantly. Light rail will connect Caloundra, the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, Kawana Town Centre, Mooloolaba and Maroochydore. A longer-term southern extension will connect to Caloundra South, Beerwah East and integrate with the North Coast Rail Line at Beerwah, as well as a possible northern extension to Sunshine Coast Airport.

We offer limited support for this priority.

Light Rail will be very expensive to implement, potentially inflexible and could be quickly outdated by changes in population density along the route and emerging technologies.

We believe there should be more emphasis in the ITS on bus transport including utilising smaller buses on many routes and schedules, alternate technologies such as hydrogen or electric powered buses, exploring use of bus ways and dedicated bus lanes, increasing the frequency of bus services and expansion of bus routes (particularly east west routes). We recognise the reality that the Council does not operate the bus system but we would like to see more emphasis on working with TransLink to provide better services.

We further believe that newer technologies such as trackless trams which run on virtual rail lines via sensors embedded in the roadway (which have already been tested in China) offer considerable cost benefits over light rail – estimated by some experts to be as little as \$5 million per kilometre compared with \$120 million per kilometre for light rail. It is vital that the Council does not invest in infrastructure that may have a short-term future and lack the flexibility and scalability required for our region.

Caloundra Access Improvements

The Caloundra access improvements project consists of a number of state and council-controlled road network upgrades to support Caloundra and help resolve congestion on Caloundra Road, particularly at the Nicklin Way roundabout and improve connectivity north, west and south.

We support this priority but believe our region must not be too car/road centric in its priorities.

Bruce Highway: Caboolture to Caloundra - six lanes

With current capacity unable to accommodate current peak demand, expanding the Bruce Highway to six lanes between Caboolture and Caloundra is required. The project will also deliver flooding and safety enhancements resulting in a more resilient national road link.

We support this priority but believe our region must not be too car/road centric in its priorities.

Additional comments

Public transport should be frequent, cheap and close to passenger homes and places of work, sporting and cultural pursuits on the Coast and indeed travel beyond the Coast if it is to be seen by the public as a viable and attractive alternative to private vehicle use. Ideally it should also be environmentally-friendly.

Council cannot use a “stick” to discourage car use (inadequate provision of parking in new developments, aggressive enforcement of verge parking infringements, progressive extension of paid parking etc) unless it is also prepared to fund infrastructure that makes public transport attractive in terms of cost, frequency and convenience – ie the “carrot”.

Shortcomings of the ITS identified by member groups

The ITS focuses too much on the big priority projects and too little on the 21 other initiatives listed in Figure 1: Priority transport projects (page 7).

We also note that the ITS barely acknowledges the needs of people with mobility difficulties whether these result from visual, cognitive, age related or physical disability. We hope this will not be reflected in the policies and actions that emerge from this strategic framework.

The continual approval of high-density development should encompass and incorporate long term planning of transport infrastructure to ensure implementation of transport strategies prior to any approval.

We are concerned that little attention has been given to the emerging pressure points north of the Maroochy River and west to Nambour.

We note that it is proposed that the Strategy will be implemented through contributions by all parties, including the private sector to plan, fund and deliver the projects, initiatives and programs. This concept of shared responsibility is endorsed by OSCAR but more emphasis needs to be placed on developer contributions, particularly for those projects that place a strain on existing community infrastructure. For example:

- Sekisui’s Yaroomba project, should it proceed, will place considerable pressure on the David Low Way transport corridor and, ultimately the Sunshine Coast Motorway north of the Maroochy River. The developer should meet a large portion of any costs associated with transport upgrades into and out of the proposed development. This issue was not adequately addressed during the Sekisui deliberations and approval.*
- Twin Waters West, should it proceed, will place pressure on existing, or any new, access points to the Sunshine Coast Motorway. The developer should, likewise, meet a large portion of costs for necessary improved transport infrastructure.*
- A fully developed Peregian Springs will place pressure on the existing single lane “motorway” from Peregian Springs to the airport turnoff and beyond (see the attached document - Sunshine Motorway - Upgrade Planning Study.pdf).*

Developers of these and future projects should also be required to contribute to funding of new priority projects for the northern part of the Coast. OSCAR recommends that two of Council’s priority projects could be further enhanced by:

- Upgrading the Coolum to Yandina Road to enable fast and safe travel from Peregian Springs (and indeed the Noosa Shire) to the Bruce Highway thus alleviating pressure on the existing arterial network south of the Maroochy River. Not only will it allow better access to the Bruce Highway but will facilitate access to Nambour and to the proposed North Coast Rail Duplication project. Such a project would meet Council’s objective of*

enhanced connectivity while alleviating pressure on existing narrow transport arterials. Such a project would also contribute to a revitalised Nambour.

- We note that while the Sunshine Coast Light Rail is included as a priority project the draft strategy states that the project could “possibly” be extended to the Sunshine Coast Airport. This is a missed opportunity should Light Rail proceed. If the airport is to contribute economically to the extent forecast then it follows that increased passenger usage must access in and out of the facility as efficiently and speedily as possible. Increased population densities (such as from Twin Waters West and Yaroomba) would also benefit with commuters driving to the airport, parking there and then catching light rail to Maroochydore, etc. Developers should contribute to this project by way of ameliorating the pressures their projects will place on existing transport facilities.*

In addition, we believe there is some justification for an enhanced transport corridor from Bli-Bli to the Sunshine Coast Motorway and northwest from Bli-Bli to Nambour. Bli-Bli is experiencing considerable growth and provision needs to be made to funnel traffic from this locality. As with an upgraded Coolum to Yandina road, an enhanced road corridor from Bli-Bli to Nambour will improve access to the proposed North Coast Rail Duplication at Nambour and also contribute to the revitalisation of Nambour.

Given that the Enterprise Corridor between the Sunshine Coast Airport and Caloundra South is identified as the focus for economic growth, we are surprised that the airport does not feature more strongly in the transport strategy. The airport should, for example, be identified as a transport node not just for incoming and outgoing air passenger traffic but as a transport hub for dispersing vehicular traffic north of the Maroochy River.

The draft strategy states that changed behaviour will be necessary if the transport strategy’s objectives are to be realised. In terms of behavioural change, OSCAR believes a “carrot and stick” approach needs to be adopted.

Parking pressure points need to be alleviated and while OSCAR is not endorsing particular strategies they need to be considered and offered for community input. Such strategies include, but are not limited to:

- an “odds and evens” approach to vehicular access to certain areas (based on a vehicle’s registration plate);*
- extension of regulated parking and paid parking in key activity centres;*
- the introduction of resident only parking permits in particularly congested locations; and*
- a “congestion tax” to discourage vehicles from accessing high density centres (such as Mooloolaba and Maroochydore).*

Council must be prepared to articulate the reasons why all, or any of these “solutions” should be considered, or not, in its overall transport strategy.

OSCAR also believes that the tourism sector needs to be encouraged to identify, develop and encourage transport strategies surrounding major events. The recent Big Pineapple Music Festival made it clear that private vehicles would not be able to park at the venue. Patrons were encouraged to use designated public transport from various locations to the event venue. The number of Council permits for major events should be restricted and only issued provided organisers can demonstrate an appropriate transport strategy for the event in question.

We note that many infrastructure projects, particularly transport infrastructure, seem to fall in the “catch-up” category. OSCAR (and we are not alone in this view) believes that critical

infrastructure needs to precede development. Too often developments are approved and subsequently developed before adequate infrastructure is in place.

As mentioned, Bli-Bli is currently undergoing significant expansion but we cannot see any evidence of transport infrastructure to cater for the increased population and commensurate increase in traffic. Recent development proposals for Yandina provide another example of the potential for significant residential expansion, and consequent population growth that is not being matched by adequate transport infrastructure and public transport provision. Perhaps developers should be required to provide not only infrastructure funding but contribute towards additional public transport services such as extra bus services into the growth areas they create.

While we have not commented on likely future technological developments in our submission, OSCAR supports strategies that encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport and the creation of new travel choices which embrace smart mobility solutions.

Additional issues that have been identified include:

- need for the Nambour-Noosa route to service the North Arm community via Bunya Road rather than going along the highway; currently the focus is on servicing tourists going to Noosa from the Nambour railway station;*
- an objection to paid parking at the beaches - Mooloolaba, Alex and Maroochydore;*
- need for bus route/s that better serve hinterland towns and villages such as Nambour, Yandina, Coolum and Valdora; and*
- use of smaller, more frequent shuttle buses.*

The Coastal Pathway

Any improvement to public transport is both commendable and essential for the liveability of the area. Designated multi type transport nodes and behaviour change is desperately needed and we would like to comment on the active travel component of the strategy.

Cycle and footpath networks must be differentiated – bike ways for transport purposes that accommodate bike riding commuters safely are vastly different than shared pathway space for recreational use for pedestrians and cyclists.

Additional bikeway lanes need to be delivered as a matter of urgency to accommodate the ever growing number of road bikes and the conflicts with motorists that it brings. Safe road cycle ways are cost effective and will reduce traffic in areas that are bike rider friendly.

There are issues with the Coastal Bike Path which fail to address significant environmental issues. It is a generic pathway drawn on paper without consideration being given to the environmental costs to the fragile sand dunes along the coast but in particular north of the Maroochy River where the dunes are a biodiversity hotspot.

Sections of the bike path disregard both the Coastal Management Plan, Queensland Government 2013, and the Environment and Liveability Strategy SCRC 2017 in its current form. The Coastal bike track section at Yaroomba will also undo rehabilitation undertaken by volunteers in Bushland Conservation Reserves as well as under the Deed of Agreement agreed to by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and Transport and Main Roads to co-manage this area with the community represented by Coolum and North Shore Coast Care.

Queensland's Coastal Management Plan 2013 states that "Human-induced changes to dune systems and degraded dune vegetation can significantly limit the protection provided to development from coastal hazards" and "Dune vegetation is naturally exposed to harsh environmental conditions, including sand blast, salt spray and high wind velocities. This can make dunes vulnerable to even

small additional pressures, including impacts such as pedestrian use...” and suggests exclusion fencing to protect dunes, as well as managed and fenced beach accesses.

It must also be remembered that on sections of coastal dunes, Bushland Conservation Reserves (BCRs) – gazetted Land for Wildlife Refuges – are fragile remnants of the original vegetation and coastal landform which support and protect wildlife (plants and animals) that have disappeared from other urban-development areas of the Sunshine Coast.

*While the design standards and parameters of the coastal pathway are no doubt sound, they must NOT be allowed to override the **primary purpose** for which the dunal strip and Bushland Conservation Reserves (BCRs) were gazetted, that is, protection of the coastal morphology and the flora and fauna that inhabit them.*

The Transport Strategy focuses on sustainable and integrated system, which is commendable. However there is failure to address the environmental significance of having intact natural areas in favour of infrastructure and “game changer” projects such as the Coastal Bike Path. While climate change has been acknowledged as a driver of the strategy the implications on dune resilience in the face of climate change has been completely overlooked in the decision to have an active travel experience along the dunes.

The Role of the Private sector – Innovation, Initiative, Capital Investment.

There is a need to think outside the box and examine private sector innovation, initiative and investment like that proposed by American Maglev Technologies Inc. Is maglev rail a feasible option for the CAMCOS corridor services through to Beerwah and the Bruce Highway corridor through to Brisbane Airport and the CBD? A rapid transit system like maglev service could reduce travel times considerably and have environmental and ongoing maintenance cost benefits. A proposal has been submitted to the State Government and it is worthy of investigation by Council.

Conclusion

We acknowledge that the draft Integrated Transport Strategy is a framework document that will be used to inform future policies and actions and we trust that it will prove a useful document for future community engagement on acceptable outcomes to achieve the objectives inherent in the strategy.

OSCAR is happy to provide further information should it be required and we are willing to meet with Council officers to discuss the ITS and its practical implementation at any time.

As an aside, we would urge Council staff to follow the OSCAR Facebook page where we have posted, and will continue to post, articles that are relevant to this Strategy development; while we do not control, or necessarily endorse, the comments that are also posted there, these are also worth considering (<https://www.facebook.com/OSCARSunshineCoast/>).

Yours sincerely



Greg Smith
President

Attachment: *Sunshine Motorway - Upgrade Planning Study.pdf*