



MAPLETON AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION ON SUNSHINE COAST MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM

The Mapleton and District Community Association (MADCA) provides the following response to the public consultation process the Sunshine Coast Council is currently conducting on the proposed Mass Transit system. MADCA takes this opportunity to thank Councillor David Law for arranging a briefing for MADCA by the Program Director Urban Growth, James Coutts at its June General Meeting.

Strategic Plan

MADCA notes that the Mass Transit System is part of the Council's strategic plan for a public transport system that meets the future transport needs of the whole of the Sunshine Coast. MADCA endorses Council undertaking the development of a strategic transport plan even though it does not control or operate any public transport, which is a State Government responsibility in an attempt to influence the State Government to plan for an appropriate public transport network for the region.

The Council proposes that the strategic transport plan presented in its draft Options Analysis report would be delivered in five stages as follows:

- A local mass transit system in the Sunshine Coast urban corridor.
- Continuing upgrades to the Beerwah to Nambour rail line.
- The provision of regional rail from Beerwah to Maroochydore via the CAMCOS corridor.
- A high frequency bus network and a feeder bus network linking key locations further along the coast and in the hinterland.
- An improved pathway network to facilitate walking, bicycle and micro-mobility access to the system.

An extensive analysis of future population growth across the Sunshine Coast is presented in the Options Analysis which is not informed by the new planning scheme, and will not be approved by the State Government until 2024. It should also be noted that Transport Minister Mark Bailey released the State Government's latest regional transport plans in March 2021, and on page 55 of Regional Transport Plans South East Queensland, it shows the CAMCOS corridor as a "Public Transport Investigation Corridor" rather than a "Heavy Rail Investigation Corridor", which suggests the State Government may be rethinking its use.

Mass Transit System

MADCA's view is that it is too early to commit to the currently proposed Mass Transit system until the impact of the new planning scheme can be considered and the future of the CAMCOS corridor is resolved. It supports further investigation of the use of the CAMCOS Corridor as an integrated component of a mass transit system, but not necessarily for heavy rail. For example, it could be used as a dedicated bus corridor servicing the needs not only of the Coastal Corridor, but linking to the heavy rail at Beerwah.

For major projects like the Mass Transit system, it has been usual for Councils to contribute about 10% of the funding, with the balance split between State and Federal governments. MADCA is concerned that the Council's transport levy on rates will rise very significantly to meet the Council's share of the proposed Mass Transit system, which will provide few direct benefits to hinterland residents.

Bus Network

MADCA supports the immediate development of a high frequency bus network and a feeder bus network linking key locations across the Sunshine Coast, such as the railway towns to the coastal centres and the airport, as it is more likely to provide shorter term results and lower infrastructure costs, while not precluding more infrastructure intensive solutions in the future. The improved amenity, given appropriate service levels and public awareness, should lead to reduced car usage and parking requirements.

In keeping with the Council's commitment to sustainability and responsible environmental management, MADCA supports the introduction as soon as practicable of the latest sustainable technologies in the bus fleet operating on the Sunshine Coast.

Upgrade of Beerwah to Nambour Rail Line

MADCA notes that the latest Federal Government budget has \$5 million allocated to the business case for doubling the existing heavy rail line to Nambour. MADCA regards the upgrade of the existing heavy rail track as an important component of an integrated transport strategy and strongly supports the doubling of the railway track to Nambour. Coupled with an enhanced bus network, it will make public transport more attractive for commuters and tourists accessing the Sunshine Coast.

Demand Responsive Buses

MADCA supports better public transport services for hinterland residents, but recognizes the challenge of the small population and the distances involved in servicing the area. MADCA supports the establishment of a pilot program to trial demand responsive transport on the Blackall Range using low carbon footprint small buses. This would help reduce traffic and parking pressures in the small hinterland villages for both residents and the growing tourist activity.

Pathways

MADCA is strongly supportive of an improved network of pathways across the Sunshine Coast to facilitate walking, bicycle and other micro-mobility access. In particular, MADCA strongly supports a pathway connecting Mapleton, Montville and Maleny and also provision of connecting pathways to Nambour and Landsborough. Such pathways would serve both residents and encourage walking/cycling tourism.

Peter Hulme

Peter Hulme
President
On behalf of the Management Committee
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