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Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line/Sunshine Coast Public Transport  
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Dear Project Team

**Subject: Feedback on the Sunshine Coast major projects consultation**

- 1 Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line (DSCRL)
- 2 Sunshine Coast Public Transport Project (SCPT)
- 3 Northern Sunshine Coast Public Transport Strategy (NSCPT)
- 4 Bus service improvements

## Introduction

OSCAR is a non-partisan and not-for-profit umbrella/peak organisation covering resident and community organisations on the Sunshine Coast and Noosa local government areas (LGAs) in South East Queensland. OSCAR currently has 40+ member groups from Pumicestone Passage to Noosa and from the Coast to the hinterland and ranges.

## General comments

While generally supportive of TMR's position on these major projects, we do have several serious concerns that we would like to draw to your attention and/or seek further clarification about.

- Our concern is that land-use planning is being prioritised over public transport needs which will result in changes to the planning scheme to facilitate increased densification around stations before the actual infrastructure is in place to accommodate the consequent increase in population.
- The community still does not properly understand TMR's priority order for these projects. Nor does it have a clear understanding of the overall implementation plan of these projects, the status and total cost of the various business cases that are underway or the committed and projected funds for the proposed projects.
- One of the Region-making projects of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council (SCRC) and supported by the State Government is the expansion of the Sunshine Coast Airport. Traffic to and from the airport originates from both north and south of the airport. These current projects do not contribute to this in a meaningful way or within an acceptable time frame.
- We are concerned that the transport network required to facilitate the Sunshine Coast's full participation in the 2032 Olympics will not be in place in time.
- Public consultation coincided with announcements about significant cuts in Commonwealth infrastructure funding. At this stage, only the Direct Rail project has any certainty of Commonwealth funding (possibly only at the reduced 50% level). Commonwealth funding for the MRI, Public Transport/ Mass Transit and the Kawana Motorway projects is in doubt meaning the State and possibly the SCRC will be expected to find the financial resources to pursue these projects. OSCAR requests TMR to provide the SC community with updates about funding options and how it will prioritise and stage these projects.

## 1 Comments on the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line

We support the **Centre Corridor** strategy advocated by TMR in the **Southern Sunshine Coast Public Transport Strategy** but only if delivered in the first stage Beerwah to Maroochydore and then stage 2 to the Sunshine Coast Airport. We do not support the Direct Line (previously CAMCOS) as a "staged implementation".

We are happy with the proposed route alignment as long as it respects environmental and cultural heritage considerations. We also feel that the proposed stations seem reasonably located (with the exception noted below). It is also reassuring that there is a commitment to make station facilities fully accessible and designs that respect local amenity and environmental values.

OSCAR nevertheless has the following concerns and we have several issues we would like clarification on:

- Maroochydore station is proposed to be a premium station yet Park 'n' Ride facilities are not proposed for Maroochydore. Unless accessible and cheap (ideally free) parking is near the Maroochydore station, people who live north and west of Maroochydore will be inclined to drive to their destinations, even Brisbane, rather than use the Direct Rail Line, as once they start a journey in their vehicles, transport mode change is difficult to achieve.

This particularly relates to residents of the Northern Sunshine Coast and Noosa, where park and ride stations are not available along the existing bus routes, the frequency of bus services is restrictive and/or people have to catch two buses to get to Maroochydore.

Alternative stations at Mountain Creek and Birtinya are not designed to include extensive park and ride facilities, with both having significant catchment areas and are therefore not a solution for residents in areas north of the Maroochy River.

Therefore commuter parking at Maroochydore Station is required beyond what is proposed. Could it be above the station or the rail station incorporated within the parking station?

- Mountain Creek station is referenced as serving the local catchment. It will also service Alexandra Headland and Mooloolaba via public transport. Could provision be made for additional park and ride, and more direct road access infrastructure be planned to the station from the eastern coastal suburbs?
- There does not appear to be a station at Beerwah East – why not, given that is where there is to be significant development into the future? We understand structure planning is agreed between the State and Council, so a station at the town centre should now be planned for.
- If there is not to be additional parking at Mountain Creek and Maroochydore, then there should be examples of proposed public transport connector/feeder bus schedules from locations at both Alexander Headland and Mooloolaba.

We agree that there must be good transport connections between the SCPT project and the DSCRL project which will also require increased, and more regular bus services.

We also appreciate the commitment to provide active transport facilities around stations and along the corridor but remain unconvinced about the likelihood of this happening to the extent required.

## 2 Comments on the Sunshine Coast Public Transport project

This project largely assumes a "spinal" transport system for the coastal corridor from Maroochydore to Caloundra rather than the "grid" network that is required. We are a decentralized community and this project does not place enough emphasis on east-to-west travel or travel north of the Maroochy River. TMR needs to recognise this reality and propose a solution that links the David Low Way, Sunshine Motorway and the Bruce Highway as well as linking Noosa to Brisbane.

We support a flexible public transport system for the Sunshine Coast that can grow and adapt as the population increases. Our membership has consistently indicated that it does not support a mass transit system that requires fixed and inflexible infrastructure, - ie light rail (with or without wires).

We do not support the densification of the coastal corridor to justify such infrastructure, or the promise of such infrastructure to justify densification unless a suitable public transport solution is funded and delivered first.

We would appreciate answers to the following:

- In the interests of transparency, will TMR publicly release the documents that led to the options for the Public Transport Project being reduced from 5 to 3 and then to only 2 ( BRT and Light Rail)?
- Dedicated corridor proposal – what does this mean exactly – is the centre dedicated corridor open or fenced off other than at intersections?
- Will there still be the same access to the beach and parking at Alexandra Headland and Mooloolaba beaches as now with an open dedicated corridor or is the plan to restrict vehicular access? Will it be like the tram system in Melbourne (old as it is) where the tram lines are fixed but there is limited restriction to traffic crossing the tram lines etc?
- Will there be “drop off points” where young families with all their beach equipment, be “dropped” off with parking for vehicles within a 2-3 minute walk of the beach?
- Does TMR have, or intend to develop, a model or 3D visualization showing the road configuration through the above 2 areas specifically?

## Recommendations

- 1 No restrictions to road areas are to be implemented until the start of construction of any selected route and then only as any section is being constructed.
- 2 TMR develop a 3D visual illustrating the road configuration including any fencing of the dedicated road corridor, any restriction to beach access and possible drop-off points.
- 3 TMR and SCRC undertake a separate consultation with the local community at both locations (Alexandra Headland and Mooloolaba).
- 4 The State Government does NOT expect significant densification of the corridor until funding is secured for the project.
- 5 Until funding is assured **and** without the SCRC raising the transport levy to high levels thus increasing its rates and charges, alternative proposals be implemented including for example declaration of a “Clear Way” along Nicklin Way between the hours of 7-9 am and 4-7 pm with traffic restricted to buses in the clearway lane between those hours. This should also include “bus priority access” at traffic signals as is done in other locations across SEQ.
- 6 Express bus services operate at key times to key locations – eg the SUCH, USC and the SC Airport.
- 7 TMR undertake the development of an active Transport Strategy across the whole of the Sunshine Coast including the hinterland in 2024.

## 3 Comments on the Northern Sunshine Coast Public Transport Strategy

OSCAR was critical in its response to TMR’s Draft Southern Sunshine Coast Public Transport Strategy that TMR’s approach was not region-wide. We said in our response that a strategy for public transport on the Sunshine Coast:

*“needs to be a whole of region one and should not focus on just one part of the Sunshine Coast. We need more than a north-south emphasis along the coastal corridor with greater regard being paid to east-west connectivity. Travel between Noosa and the Sunshine Coast is also not addressed despite the significant vehicle movements between the two LGAs each day”.*

We acknowledge that this new Northern SCPT strategy may address our concerns but until the details of the Strategy emerge it is difficult to know whether our previously expressed concerns/suggestions have been addressed.

OSCAR will be making further comments and suggestions about the NSCPT Strategy by the January 2024 date.

## 4 Bus service improvements

While reassuring to know that TMR is looking to introduce new bus routes, additional trips and longer operating hours to continue to improve connections between stations, key destinations and areas across the Sunshine Coast, we are doubtful that many of these things will happen due to the financial resources that will be required for competing projects on the Sunshine Coast.

We are referring particularly to the DSCRL (which OSCAR supports and would like to see as the priority project for government funding for the Sunshine Coast) and the SCPT (about which OSCAR has serious concerns due to the

likely cost of the TMR's preferred fixed-infrastructure option of light rail and bus rapid transit and the fact that these, of themselves, will do little to alleviate public transport problems north and west of Maroochydore).

We agree that an improved bus network must connect the community to stations and stops for whichever of the North Coast Line, the Sunshine Coast Public Transport and the Direct Sunshine Coast Rail Line projects eventuate.

We also support the "aspiration" that TMR will provide convenient connections to major centres and popular destinations, including:

- University of the Sunshine Coast
- Sunshine Coast University Hospital
- Nambour, Landsborough and the wider Sunshine Coast hinterland
- Sunshine Coast Airport
- north to Yandina, Cooroy, Coolumb and Noosa.

OSCAR has advocated in the past and will continue to do so into the future, for specific improvements including:

- A public transport system based on zero-emissions buses with express services on key routes, extended hours of operation, increased route frequencies and reduced travel times.
- OSCAR acknowledges that TMR has introduced zero-emission buses on the Sunshine Coast. We urge that the rollout be accelerated and we seek assurance that no non zero-emission buses are purchased in the future.
- 30-minute services to the hinterland areas (currently mostly 1 to 2 hourly intervals).
- Better hinterland, Sunshine Coast Airport, USC, Nambour TAFE and Sunshine Coast University Hospital connections.
- Appropriate provision of park and ride facilities.

## Conclusion

A comment made recently in the Planning and Environment Court relating to road networks, and which applies to all forms of transport including Public Transport is: "any decision made re this issue will impact over time immemorial."

Given the significance of the transport options included in this consultation and the willingness of TMR to include the community via public consultation, it is critical that TMR continue to share with the community of the Sunshine Coast their ideas, plans, issues and concerns. The community looks to TMR to be transparent re priorities, funding arrangements and modes of transport.

The decisions made in the next two years will define transport on the Sunshine Coast for decades to come. We thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and look forward to further engagement with TMR.

Yours sincerely



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