

23 March 2005

Ms Maureen Weeks
Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs
and Transport Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Weeks

AusLink (National Land Transport) Bill 2004
AusLink (National Land Transport – Consequential and
Transitional Provisions) Bill 2004

Thank you for your letter of 2 March 2005 inviting the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to make a submission to your Committee's inquiry into the abovementioned bills.

The MAV is the peak body for Victoria's 79 Councils and has played a key facilitation role in transport and asset management issues across the sector in Victoria. The MAV's Step Asset Management Program is recognised as a leading edge methodology in raising the performance of local government in terms of asset management practices.

The MAV strongly supports the AusLink philosophy of integrated national land transport and would make the following comments in relation to the AusLink Bill and future direction:

1. The MAV supports the emphasis on integrated land transport in the AusLink Program, and it is to be hoped that the future decision-making processes supporting AusLink are consistent with this philosophy.
2. The MAV supports the establishment of the National Transport Data Framework (NTDF), as approved by the Australian Transport Council last November, as a key means of enabling informed planning and decision-making to take place in the AusLink context. The AusLink Program needs to be based on identifying needs and opportunities in the relevant areas of freight and system connectivity, and this can only take place if there is a systemic information system developed to support informed decision-making.
3. Given that local roads represent some 84% of the total national road length, and that 76% of all freight trips start or finish on a local road, it is seen as important that local roads are fully included in the National Transport Data Framework, and Appendix A includes a letter to Minister John Anderson from the MAV in this regard.
4. Future resource allocation under the AusLink Program needs to reflect decision-making that has analysed freight growth and associated connectivity issues and opportunities. This cannot occur if 'traditional' formulae referring to road length and population are used as the primary basis of decision-making. It is to be hoped that the NTDF will be the basis of a more sophisticated methodology that will result in improved outcomes and competitiveness for the Australian transport network.

5. The MAV supports the establishment of a National Infrastructure Advisory Council. We would strongly advocate the involvement of local government on this Council as well as the need for the Terms of Reference of such a Council to take into account the matter of community sustainability. The issue of rural sustainability, in particular, is one of the key challenges facing the Australian nation and the development of social capital via 'bottom up' community planning is now receiving global recognition as a key strategy to respond to this challenge. This has significant implications for the definition of 'infrastructure' and of the need to widen the scope of the definition as far as is practicable so as to be able to include telecommunications and other community revitalisation investments with long life and high capital expense, including recreation, township amenity and water-related initiatives.
6. The MAV fully supports the Roads to Recovery (R2R) Program as a clear example of a successful 'whole of government' collaborative initiative with very low overheads and very high deliverables. There is a need to continue this investment but to link it more closely to the sustainability 'gap' on local roads to enable a quantification of the costs and benefits of the Program. It is suggested that the National Transport Data Framework (NTDF) would be an excellent means of analysing and demonstrating the effectiveness of the Roads to Recovery Program within a systemic framework. Again this would support the AusLink philosophy of integrated transport planning rather than an ad hoc funding initiative. The MAV would support the broadening of the scope of R2R criteria to enable local councils to have a degree of choice in relation to their transport-related priorities.

I trust these observations will assist the Committee's deliberations and help achieve a quick and harmonious passage of this important legislation.

If you need any further information or clarification of the above information, please contact Mr John Hennessy at the MAV on 03 9667 5525 or email jhennessy@mav.asn.au

Yours sincerely



Rob Spence
Chief Executive Officer

21 March 2005

The Hon John Anderson
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Transport and Regional Services
House of Representatives
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Minister Anderson

National Local Roads Information Project

First, I would like to congratulate you and the Federal Government for your ongoing support of Local Government through the renewal of the Roads to Recovery Program. This program is universally supported by Australian Local Governments and has been an enormous aid to replenishing and repairing hundreds of thousands of kilometres of local roads, on which over 75% of all freight trips start or finish.

We are encouraged by the AUSLINK initiative to better coordinate planning by Federal, State and Local Governments in building a world-class transport network.

Local government is aware that government departments and other organisations are increasingly looking towards the utilization of integrated information systems and their outputs to inform strategic planning and decision-making processes. The National Transport Data Framework (NTDF), developed to support Auslink, and the Australian Bureau of Statistic's National Data Network (NDN) are both ground-breaking examples of integrated transport planning that will benefit all Australians in the future.

To be considered a relevant, competent and valued player, local government will need to embark on a similar information system approach to its state/territory and commonwealth counterparts.

I write to you to inform you that the Australian Local Government Association has recently endorsed a significant local road data and information project, the National Local Roads Information Project (NLRIP).

This project is an ambitious data information project that will require significant council effort and resources, and will build on the ALGA's National Local Roads Data Project (NLRDP) which seeks to aggregate local roads data from existing sources including the Grants Commission.

The NLRIP will improve the accuracy of local roads information at a council level, and develop a capacity within the sector, to share, compare, and aggregate information to better support local, regional, state and national views of it and most importantly, the

decisions based on it. The local roads data will enable local roads and transport systems to be incorporated into the NTDF.

The Victorian and Queensland LG Associations have invested heavily in advanced interoperable systems that are now reflected in the Queensland Roads Alliance systems architecture. All LG Associations are now highly supportive of an integrated local transport data base. Each State and Territory is now scoping a 'local' transport hub in its area and this will need to support the national standards of the NTDF. This is a major challenge that will improve the capability of local government and is highly supportive of the 'systemic' approach of AusLink. I would like to explore possible start up funding support from the Commonwealth as an important means of obtaining commitment by councils to this important outcome.

The need to incorporate local roads and transport systems into the national 'model' is of undeniable significance and we now have the methodology to achieve this outcome. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with you further. Should your office or department require any further information about this project, please contact Peter Walsh, Policy Director, on 9667 5547.

Yours Sincerely

Geoff Lake
President
Municipal Association Victoria