



Response to the

Parliament of Australia Senate Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services.

March 2009

Introduction

The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) Limited represents nearly two million members and has on average a member in three out of every four households across the State. RACV thus has a keen interest in the funding of public transport as it directly affects the mobility, and hence quality of life, of our members.

RACV notes the submission prepared by the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) on behalf of State and Territory Clubs and endorses this submission.

This RACV submission is intended to supplement the AAA submission. It describes recent RACV research which is relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, and expands on the AAA submission to highlight critical public transport infrastructure needs of Victoria.

Funding of public transport

RACV endorses the AAA submission which outlines why Federal Government investment in public transport is necessary and justifiable.

In essence, we argue that there is a compelling economic, environmental and social case for the Commonwealth to invest in public transport infrastructure in urban centres. This is based on productivity gains, improved environmental outcomes and improved quality of life. In addition the RACV supports the AAA call for a greater share of fuel excise revenue being devoted to transport infrastructure including both road and public transport projects. We also support the AAA statements that continued and increasing investment in roads is critical for economic and social reasons and also because a large proportion of public transport operates on roads.

State Government has traditionally been the primary funder of public transport infrastructure and its ongoing operational costs. RACV argues that State Government should remain responsible for the operational aspects of public transport, noting that running a public transport system continues to be a fundamental role of the State.

Public Private Sector Partnerships

RACV is supportive of using Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for the delivery of major projects or packages of projects where engagement of the private sector through a PPP will bring about innovation, economies of scale and/or earlier delivery than may be possible through normal Government budgeting arrangements. RACV has a clear view that State and Federal Government funding should be maximised for all projects prior to the consideration of using a Public Private Partnership. RACV supports the use of Public Private Partnerships especially where the capital cost of a project could well be beyond normal Government budgets.

A key issue which presents an encumbrance to the timely use of PPP's in Victoria is the need for separate legislation for each PPP project. In our submission to Infrastructure Australia (attached), we argued that Infrastructure Australia should establish the most desirable form for a PPP and also establish mechanisms whereby individual legislation on a state by state basis is not required.

Victoria's future public transport Infrastructure requirements

The Victorian Government released the Victorian Transport Plan in November 2008. In advocating the critical need for improved public transport in this Plan prior to and post its release, RACV drew attention to the need for cross-town heavy and light rail to be considered as part of a longer term 30-40 year plan for Melbourne. Melbourne needs to move away the outdated hub and spoke or radial approach prevalent in the existing rail and tram networks. We also drew attention to the need for stronger integration between land use plans and transport and the need for designated growth corridor strategies to include public transport services. Critical in the long-term plan is the need to define future transport projects and moving to secure land reservations for these projects.

In regard to the transport projects required over the next decade, RACV has proposed a comprehensive suite of public transport and road initiatives to cater for the burgeoning population and jobs growth in Melbourne. Details of these projects are contained in the attached copy of our submission to the Victorian Government. This overall approach provides a context for our proposals to Infrastructure Australia and shows how they link into the rest of the State and Australia.

In regard to our submission to Infrastructure Australia we will concentrate on those projects within the attached submission which particularly deal with population and jobs growth pressures and will assist in building national economic capacity. We also see as critical, strategies to make the current transport system work harder (many of our proposals to the Victorian Government will achieve this outcome) , active demand management to reduce the need for travel, but particularly more innovative approaches to ensure smooth flow on the arterial road and freeway networks. VicRoads are actively engaged in implementing freeway management systems which address this issue. Our submission to the Victorian Government has also placed very strong emphasis on the need to ramp up implementation of improvements to the public transport network in Melbourne to provide the community with genuine choice of travel mode.

The RACV in it's submission to Infrastructure Australia, highlighted five strong public transport and road projects for Federal infrastructure funding. Key amongst these were the public transport project below, and we commend these to the Inquiry as metropolitan-shaping improvements to public transport.

- The Rail Tunnel connecting Footscray to Caulfield via Melbourne University, Melbourne Underground, St. Kilda Rd area, South Yarra and Caulfield to provide a genuine cross-town rail link which will give a boost to cross-town travel and also free up the remaining rail lines for improved service levels - a proposal from the Eddington Report.
- The Tarneit rail line connecting the Geelong-Werribee line around the north of Werribee to the northern group of rail lines which will provide alternative rail transport for this rapidly growing area of Melbourne (amongst the top 10 in Australia) and also provide an alternative route for VLine services to Southern Cross and free up the metropolitan rail system in this area for increased services - a proposal from the Eddington report.

Additional comments on the Inquiry Terms of Reference

This section provides additional comments to the AAA submission on the Inquiry Terms of Reference, highlighting relevant RACV research.

ToR (a): An audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia.

RACV recommends that any audit of public passenger transport in Australia be as inclusive as possible. This Inquiry needs to adopt a broad definition of “passenger transport services” which should include taxi services, especially specialised taxi services for people in wheelchairs, community transport services, many of which are funded by the Federal Government through the Home and Community Care (HACC) program, and demand responsive transport services, like flexi-buses, dial-a-ride programs and other similar services. These transport services are vital to people who have physical or cognitive limitations that render them unable to drive a car and in many cases use many forms of traditional public transport.

RACV released a detailed report about transport services for people who cannot drive in 2006 (Harris and Tapsas, 2006), and are due to release a further report on this topic later this year. Their research has shown that people who cannot drive a motor car due to disability or an age related condition have limited mobility as a result, and in turn many can become isolated and socially excluded.

ToR (b): Current and historical levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure.

The Federal Government, in conjunction with State Governments, funds community transport services through its HACC (Home and Community Care) Program.

There are a number of short-comings with the current program. Some of the problems were outlined in a report prepared by RACV (Harris and Tapsas, 2006). RACV urges the Committee to investigate HACC funded transport through this Inquiry and to recommend relevant improvements.

ToR (c): An assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives.

At a basic level, one of the key benefits of transportation is that it enables individuals to engage in meaningful social, family, work and education related activities. In short, transport enables people to be socially included.

We are aware of the importance that the Federal Government places on social inclusion, and this has been demonstrated with the recent establishment of the Australian Social Inclusion board. RACV believes that one of the key challenges for all levels of Government in trying to achieve social inclusion is ensuring all members of the community have adequate transport, and for people who are unable to drive themselves public passenger transport is critical. This is particularly important for older Australians and Australians with a disability. Inadequate or inappropriate public passenger transport services can mean that they are unable to undertake many social trips and without this social engagement, their risk of becoming isolated, depressed and suffering subsequent physical illness greatly increases. The consequences of a large number of older Australians becoming socially isolated due to a lack of transport would be significant, especially in economic terms. The cost burden of caring for older Australians in hospitals and nursing homes would greatly outweigh the cost of investing in improved transport services that would enable older and disabled Australians to remain in their own homes.

Federal, State and local Governments all need to implement improvements to mobility and transport programs to ensure that transport related social isolation and its consequences do not worsen with the ageing of the population.

ToR (d): Measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvement in public passenger transport services and infrastructure.

Improving the accessibility and level of mobility for disabled non-drivers will become increasingly important as the population ages as there will be an even greater number of people with age-related disabilities in the future. Significant improvements are needed which include:

- Providing greater assistance in the form of information and funds, to help disabled people modify vehicles to enable them to continue driving if they are safe to do so
- Investing in demand responsive transport, that fills the gap between mass transit and individualised escorted trips, like HACC transport or taxis
- Encouraging State Governments to:
 - improve the level of metropolitan taxis services for wheelchair users
 - provide useful information about the accessibility of public transport
 - conduct research into the times, destinations, routes and types of vehicle required to satisfy the transport needs of disabled people.

It is widely regarded within the transport sector that flexible, demand responsive services may greatly assist in meeting the transport needs of households without cars (Stanley, Currie, Stanley, 2007). Services that provide flexible transport, that is often curb-to-curb, delivers a service that is easier to access than mass public transport, but is suitable for people who don't require door-to-door transport. Flexible transport services are far more prominent in many European cities and more flexible demand responsive transport services need to be trialed in Australia to determine the extent to which they can alleviate transport related social isolation.

ToR (e): The role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport.

Policies and regulations that address land use planning need to be reviewed to ensure that all new developments, either residential, medical, educational, business or service related, need to be easily accessible via public transport. If effective, such policies would not only provide environmental benefits by achieving greater public transport usage, but also would enable better access to services for older and disabled Australians who are no longer able to drive.

ToR (f): Best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure.

There are a number of examples of good practice in public passenger transport services. In its 2006 report, RACV outlined some examples of good practice that they discovered during a brief international study tour (refer to Harris and Tapsas, 2006).

In addition, the UK Government has promoted an integrated approach to transport and local planning for a number of years. They require local authorities (usually boroughs) to develop plans that promote locations that are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. The development of local area "accessibility plans" is tied to federal transport funding (Lucas, 2003). The effectiveness of this approach should be examined by Australian Governments. It has been noted that there is a limit to what land-use planning can achieve, and this UK Government policy can be difficult to implement in the face of pressures at a local level from

private developers (Mackett and Titheridge, 2004). However, it is still regarded as a very promising policy initiative and reflects a central Government that takes land-use planning and accessibility seriously.

References

Harris, A. & Tapsas, D. (2006) *Transport and mobility: Challenges, Improvements and Innovations*. (Report No. 06/01) Royal Automobile Club of Victoria.

Lucas, K. (2003) *Transport and social exclusion: a G7 comparison study*, Paper presented at the European Transport Conference at Strasbourg on 8-10 October, 2003, The Association for European Transport.

Mackett, R. & Titheridge, H. (2004) *A methodology for the incorporation of social inclusion into transport policy*, World conference on transport research, July 2004, Istanbul, Turkey

Stanley, J. Currie, G., & Stanley, J. (2007) Chapter 16: The Way to Go?, *No Way to Go* 2007; (5): 16.1–16.11.