

The Secretary  
Senate Committee - Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

27 February 2009

Dear Sir

**Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services**

Roads Australia (RA) is a not for profit industry association that embraces public, private and community sector organisations with an interest in Australia's road transport system. Roads Australia represents the industry's common interest on road transport issues, as they relate to Australia's economic and social well-being.

Roads Australia provides a forum in which all industry participants can work together effectively to progress the development of industry and public policy in the interest of the Australian road transport sector.

Australia's road transport system is the nation's greatest infrastructure asset, underpinning all our other institutions and services.

Roads Australia sees its role as promoting the development, maintenance and enhancement of an effective, efficient road system throughout Australia – one that is adequate and appropriate for its task and makes the best use of limited resources.

One of the key focus areas for RA is ensuring Australia's road network is given the priority and recognition it deserves, consistent with the part it plays in underpinning the social, economic and cultural fabric of the nation.

To that end, Roads Australia makes this submission to the inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services because of the important role public transport plays in the efficiency of the road network.

Roads Australia's submission addresses three key areas of the inquiry:

1. an assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives;
2. measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate

improvement in public passenger transport services and infrastructure;

3. the role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport;

## 1. Benefits of public transport

An effective public transport system is a vital to ensuring the best use of Australia's total road system. Efficient and accessible public transport will play major role in solving Australia's urban congestion issues, which hamper the most effective use of the road system.

Urban congestion is an increasing problem in all states and territories. The Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (BTRE) estimated the avoidable cost of traffic congestion – that is the increase in net social benefit if management schemes enabled optimal traffic flows. Estimated increases in costs from extra travel time, increased unreliability, higher vehicle operating costs (especially fuel use) and poorer air quality, were based on the aggregate 'avoidable' (or excess) costs of congestion under a 'business-as-usual' scenario. The BTRE 2007<sup>1</sup> estimates shown in **Error! Reference source not found.** are a direct measure of what can, in principle, be achieved by tackling the congestion problem.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Sydney</i>	<i>Melbourne</i>	<i>Brisbane</i>	<i>Adelaide</i>	<i>Perth</i>
2009	4.577	3.826	1.593	0.731	1.145
2020	7.755	6.123	3.027	1.084	2.068

Roads Australia supports measures that will reduce congestion, including increased investment on public passenger transport infrastructure and services.

In Australia, however, it is important to note that the most frequented type of public transport takes place on the roads –buses.

## 2. Measures for improving public transport services and infrastructure

Effective public transport must be efficient and reliable. Road-based public transport is made less efficient as a result of urban congestion.

Congestion mitigation options provide priority for more efficient movement, such as providing priority for movement of people and goods rather than simply vehicle movement.

Making best use of capacity may involve allocating lanes for 'high value' travel, such as providing high occupancy vehicle lanes (eg T2 or T3 lanes) or bus priority lanes or facilities to improve bus travel times such as priority for buses at intersections and could also include providing priority for freight movements on key links.

Targeted infrastructure development remains an important element of congestion management, particularly in relation to strategic gaps in the transport network. The cost of infrastructure in highly built up areas is considerable, so a combination of measures to augment existing capacity should be done in conjunction with expansion proposals. Measures could include expanding capacity to address travel demand by

1 BTRE (2007) *Estimating Urban Traffic and Congestion Cost Trends for Australian Cities*, Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, Canberra.

providing new motorways and arterial road capacity for strategic gaps and providing complementary road-based public transport facilities, such as bus rapid transit.

More must be done to manage demand on our roads more effectively, by giving priority to high occupancy vehicles. It must also be said that state road authorities are already working hard to give priority to people rather than cars, by use of bus lanes, B-signals at traffic lights and other such programs.

Continued investment must be made into designing roads that allocate road space to the highest value use.

Investment should also be made into smarter management of existing road space to provide greater access for buses and other high occupancy vehicles.

Australian governments should develop and improve comprehensive integrated strategic and short-term regional transport and land-use plans. The Commonwealth Government has an important role to play in providing a more coordinated approach to regional transport and land-use plans.

Such management plans, to be agreed by all levels of government in a region and supported by legislation or inter-agency agreement and budget funding, should have the following components:

A longer-term approach to reducing congestion is improved land use planning considering transport impacts. By varying the type, density and pattern/layout of development and by encouraging the use of public transport, planners can influence travel behaviour and reduce car travel.

Transit-oriented development is one measure being progressed in many jurisdictions at major transit interchanges to encourage reduced travel and increased public transport use. This involves mixed-use precincts, including residential, retail and commercial and quality, high frequency transit services to major centres.

### **3. The role of Commonwealth Government mechanisms to encourage or discourage public transport use**

Roads Australia supports the introduction of road pricing to improve the efficiency of our roads. For road pricing to be effective, a range of viable public transport options must be available so that travellers can choose to leave the car at home.

These public transport options should be across different forms, including bus, light rail, heavy rail as well as non-motorised options such as walking and cycling.

Changing travel behaviour through pricing mechanisms includes area or route road-use charging, parking pricing and financial measures. Comprehensive road-use pricing schemes impose charges on all motorists that travel within a defined area, either the charges may be levied either for crossing a cordon around the area or for circulating within the area. An example is the London Congestion Charging Scheme<sup>2</sup>. Route charging schemes involve charging motorists for travel on single routes and corridors only and includes both toll roads and high occupancy/toll (HOT) lanes<sup>3</sup> – the latter have become popular in the US. Variable tolls can be applied according to time of day, degree of congestion, distance travelled or type of vehicle.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.dft.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging](http://www.dft.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging)

<sup>3</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-occupancy\\_toll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-occupancy_toll)

Financial and taxation measures aim to provide monetary incentives for travellers to use modes that reduce congestion.

Providing travel choices involves reducing the use of single occupant car travel and encouraging travellers to share vehicles, increase vehicle occupancy, use public transport, cycle or walk. Parking policy measures aim to restrain the level of parking and hence of road traffic movements.

The US Urban Partnerships Program<sup>4</sup> provides grant funding to selected metropolitan areas, including Miami, Minneapolis, San Francisco and Seattle, to address traffic congestion to incorporate congestion pricing, improved transit, telecommuting and technology.

Changing aspects of the demand for travel includes measures that reduce the need for travel and change the time of day people travel.

The TravelSmart<sup>5</sup> program, which operates in many states, incorporate many aspects of voluntary travel behaviour change, including travel planning for households, schools and work places, targeted travel information and awareness campaigns. They encourage reduced use of single occupant vehicles, and increased use of public transport, walking and cycling.

Roads Australia, through its Congestion Policy Chapter, is working with its members (more than 60 companies) to encourage adoption of TravelSmart programs in each company.

In summary, Roads Australia supports the Commonwealth Government's efforts to invest further in public transport infrastructure and services. RA is well placed to work with the Commonwealth Government to provide an industry perspective on proposed policy initiatives relevant to the road transport sector.

This submission has been prepared by Roads Australia, with the assistance of Professor Phil Charles, University of Queensland & Ern Cottman, Hyder

Yours sincerely



Ian Webb  
**Chief Executive**

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<sup>4</sup> [www.upa.dot.gov](http://www.upa.dot.gov)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.travelsmart.gov.au/>