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27th February 2009.

Re: Senate Committee Inquiry into Public Transport Infrastructure and Funding.

I am writing to you on behalf of the NSROC member councils (which is comprised of seven councils: Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Ryde, and Willoughby in the northern part of Sydney) to provide comment on the Senate Committee Inquiry into Public Transport Infrastructure and funding.

The purpose of this submission is to highlight the current and growing need for adequate investment in transport infrastructure in Sydney. Specifically the NSROC councils recommend the need to deliver substantive public transport infrastructure in the North and North West sector of Sydney.

The Federal Government's recognition of the importance of infrastructure provision for the national economy is very welcome. Australia and in particular the nation's major cities have suffered from the chronic and substantial under-provision of transport infrastructure, with the impacts increasingly felt in economic, social and environmental terms. Public transport infrastructure is but one component and cannot be divorced from the need for an overall Transport Infrastructure Strategy.

While the Northern Region has substantial infrastructure for road, rail and some other transport services, that infrastructure:

- Will not be able to serve the Region's increased demands due to urban consolidation, sustained competitive economic growth and cross regional transport (particular Western and Central Coast through traffic) without a long term plan for maintenance and upgrades to keep pace with demand.
- Will impact on the sustainability of the region's economic output which is estimated to amount to about \$32 billion each year. That is about 16 per cent of the output for the greater Sydney metropolitan area (the Statistical Division of Sydney) and 11 per cent of the state's GSP, despite only accounting for 8 per cent of its population and less than 1 per cent of its total area (ABS census data, ABS 2002 and NSROC Organisation 2002).

The NSROC councils are already grappling with issues associated with transport, specifically an infrastructure network that is operating at, or close to, capacity and

discussions with each of the NSROC Councils showed that they ranked the current level of traffic congestion high in their list of concerns, and that it was becoming progressively worse across the whole region. Considerable recent attention has been given to the severe impacts likely to be created by the traffic congestion in the south and west of Sydney, but it appears that the point will be reached at some time in the future when the pain will be shared equally across the entire city.

The NSROC region is serviced by five major arterial roads in particular. These are the F3 Freeway from the north, the Pacific Highway, Pennant Hills Road, Lane Cove/Ryde Road, and Epping Road / M2 tollway. Anecdotally, peak hours on most of these roads on weekdays already extends from 6.30am to 9.30am and 3.30pm till 7pm. A characteristic of each is that none service only this region – all are corridors linking Newcastle, the Central Coast or the Northern Beaches to the city and further south (Pennant Hills Rd and Pacific Highway); or the city and Eastern Suburbs to the Western Suburbs and the Blue Mountains (Victoria Rd & Epping Rd); or the south-west region to the north and north east (Lane Cove Rd / Ryde Rd).

The new M7 tollway has aggravated the existing congestion on Pennant Hills Rd and Epping Rd / M2. Vehicles travelling from Melbourne to Brisbane confront a set of 20-30 traffic lights on Pennant Hills Rd before they reach the F3 on their way north. Alternatively, they concentrate on the M2 east of Pennant Hills Rd if they are heading to the city. Longer term, the progressive growth of the North West sector and then the addition of its new growth centre, will also cause more cars to feed out onto both the M2 and Pennant Hills Rd depending on their destination. This build up can be expected to occur unabated until the proposed rail line to the new growth centre in the north-west sector becomes operational after 2017.

In the longer term, the population of the Central Coast and Hunter Region are also likely to continue to swell in parallel with that of the Sydney Basin, be this strategically directed through the Hunter and Illawarra Subregional Plan or as a product of market forces. Again, there are no short-term plans to augment the rail system between the three regions, so that passenger cars are likely to remain the transport-mode of choice. The Pacific Highway at Wahroonga and Pennant Hills Rd at the F3 termination points will be the immediate recipients of this increasing pressure. The evidence therefore points to an inescapable move towards severe traffic congestion throughout the NSROC region well before 2034, and most likely gridlock during morning and evening peak hours.

The failure to continue to provide new infrastructure has already resulted in less than optimal terms of economic efficiency and which are increasingly unsustainable in environmental and social terms. The resulting congestion is also imposing increasing economic costs on businesses and families throughout the Northern Sydney region and affecting its competitiveness, especially when comparable urban regions in Australia and overseas are investing in infrastructure.

NSROC has identified the following key transport infrastructure priorities in its own Subregional Planning Strategy released in 2006.

- Completion of the Parramatta – Chatswood Rail Link;
- Completion of the M2 – F3 Orbital Link;
- Hornsby to Newcastle High Speed Rail Link;
- Bus-only Transit way between Chatswood and the Brookvale / Dee Why Centre;
- Integrated public transport to Macquarie Park;
- A second Harbour Bridge Rail Crossing;

- A pilot Project to introduce Demand Responsive Transport Public Transport Services that complement and meet service gap areas under the new Principal Bus Contractors arrangements;
- Creation of transport strategy for the Victoria Road corridor, to address private vehicle and public transport;
- Improvements to major intersections on state arterial roads;
- Retention of existing ferry services in the region and exploration of possible extension of the ferry services;
- Creation of a Pacific Highway Corridor Strategy to relieve growing pressure on this major North-South artery; and
- A strong focus on, and commitment to, active transport (bicycle and pedestrian) programs and infrastructure.
- North West Metro/Heavy Rail Link

NSROC welcomes the opportunity to appear before the Senate Committee Inquiry to discuss these issues.

Yours sincerely,



Clr Pat Reilly,
President
Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
(Mayor, Willoughby Council)