SOUTH WEST GROUP

A Co-operative venture of the municipalities of:
Cockburn, East Fremantle, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville & Rockingham

Date: February 27, 2009
Reference: Senate Public Transport Submission Feb 09

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

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

Introduction
The South West Group, formed in November 1983, is a Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (VROC). It comprises the Cities of Cockburn, Fremantle, Melville, and Rockingham, and the Towns of East Fremantle and Kwinana. The South West Group is managed by a Board consisting of the Mayors and CEOs of its member local government authorities.

The South West Group seeks to work with these six local governments and through cooperation with industry, community and the other spheres of government to capture a wide range of opportunities to enhance economic growth as well as supporting a diversity of quality lifestyles whilst servicing and sustaining cohesive, productive communities in an enviable environmental setting.

Audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia
The South West Group believes that much past investment has been made in radially designed public transport systems that feed patrons from the suburbs to the Capital City and that much more investment needs to be made in establishing a public transport network that facilitates transport from suburb to suburb, and interfaces with regional hospitals, urban shopping centres, universities, TAFE colleges, recreation facilities and industrial estates.

Outer suburbs typically have poor public transport systems but provide the opportunity to develop transit orientated developments and establish high density nodes to support public transport viability. A strongly networked public transport system provides the opportunity to establish vibrant hubs as transit orientated developments.

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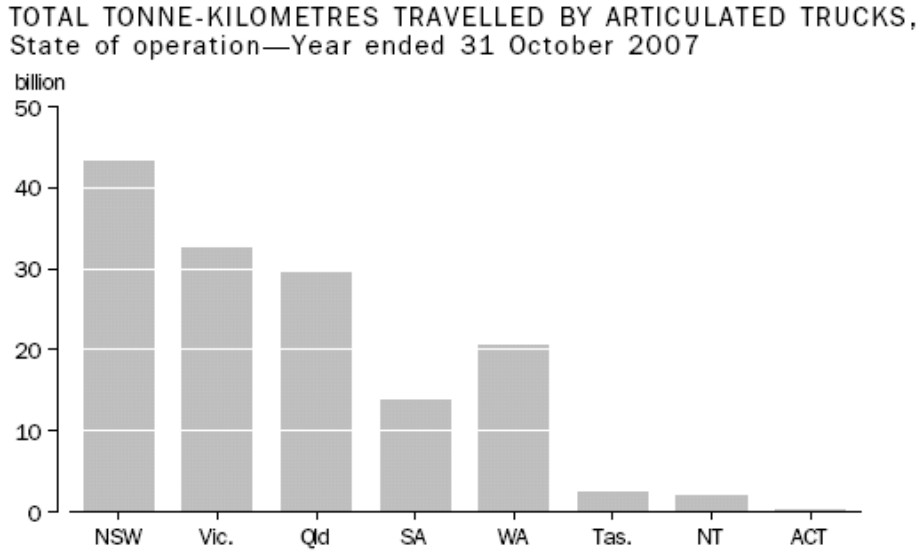
The South West Group has concern that major urban centres such as Fremantle can end up as being on transport cul de sacs and not having a strong relationship to their surrounding communities.

There is persistent demand within South West Corridor communities for “CAT” type buses that operate on a circular route linking destinations from a community perspective to facilities such as aged care and to residential suburbs. The State Public Transport Authority response is that they do not have the resources to provide these services and that they are battling to replace their existing fleets and meet the demands of suburbs with no services.

Current and historical levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure

One hundred years ago rail typically represented half of the annual infrastructure investment of state governments. In Western Australia an average of 200 kilometres of rail was being constructed each year in the period 1900 to 1920. Rail then played the preeminent role for land freight, mail and passenger transport. Competition from air transport and heavy vehicles has changed the role of rail. Energy policy and investment in intermodal infrastructure should drive an expanding role for rail.

Figure 1



Source ABS 9208.0 released August 28, 2008

In Western Australia there are over 20 billion tonne kilometres travelled by articulated vehicles and it will take some time and careful planning before funds can be redirected from road funding to rail funding.

The funding under Auslink 2 for the Perth Urban Freight Corridor is barely sufficient to meet the demands of the road network and is not a potential source of funding for public transport. An investment of over $2 billion is required to establish high quality high frequency public transport within the South West Corridor of Metropolitan Perth alone and further multi million dollar investment is required for road transport links arising from the development of the new Kwinana Ports.

The draft Western Australian Infrastructure Strategy identifies expenditure over the next 20 years of $4.462 billion on transport in Western Australia. Over half of this expenditure is simply replacing existing buses, railcars and coaches.

Assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiative

The task of establishing a high quality high frequency public transport system that captures at least 25% of the daily journeys to work in the Perth Metropolitan Area is beyond the capacity of the Western Australian Government. They have been unable to keep up with the demand for ordinary bus services to cater for the rapid growth of the city. The new Southern Suburbs Rail has significant potential but requires at least another 5 stations in the next ten years. Existing stations are at an average spacing of 7 kilometres.

The design and creation of transit orientated developments creates the opportunity to link with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives. In the 1990's the Federal Government through the Better Cities initiative provided the Perth Cat Bus Service and significantly improved cycleways. In moving to establish a lower environmental footprint similar initiatives should be supported by the Federal Government within a live and work local campaign.

Measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvement in public passenger transport services and infrastructure

The Federal Government should provide a $ for $ subsidy to trial innovative transport technologies such as optically guided trams/buses, double articulated vehicles, ultra light rail and support establishment of public transport priority corridors that can evolve from busways to other transport technologies. Priority should be given to those communities that have a live and work local campaign and are following transit oriented development principles in high growth areas.

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

The operation costs of public transport in metropolitan areas should be supported by the Federal Government where it can be demonstrated that parking strategies, housing density and urban planning are supporting the increase in use of alternatives to low occupancy private vehicles.

Employees should be able to purchase public transport "smart rider" tickets with pre tax earnings and be FBT exempt for transactions of $100 and above. FBT should be restructured to remove the incentive for high kilometre travel to reduce the amount of FBT for passenger vehicles.

Local governments should be supported in initiatives to encourage their communities to reduce the reliance on travel by private vehicles.

Best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure

There are many instances of integration of public transport services with urban design such as Vancouver, Seattle, Washington, Bologna, Bogotá, Portland and Rouen.

The C40 Cities site gives a good overview see:
http://www.c40cities.org/bestpractices/transport/

Rouen is a good example of how a small city can innovate in public transport and increase its public transport patronage by 60% over 10 years. See
http://www.veolia-transport.com/en/company/key-locations/rouen.aspx

ROUEN KEY FIGURES

- **Population served**: 530,000 inhabitants
- **Passengers transported**: 40.3 million passengers/year
- **Kilometers traveled**: 13 million km/year
- **Network**: 2 lines of light metro, 34 regular bus lines, 3 TEOR lines, 9 public taxis
- **BRT Network**:
  37.6 kilometers of routes, 52 stations, 64 optically-guided articulated buses
  40,000 trips per day

Iris Bus (see http://www.irisbus.com/en-uk/Irisbus/Pages/home.aspx) is an example of modern transport technology.

Iris bus Cristalis trolley bus

Light rail has dominated discussions about future transport technology but there are a wide range of technologies including trolley buses, double articulated vehicles, guided vehicles (wire, optical, single rail) and ultra light rail.

The Federal Government should support a national series of Transport Forums for the community giving best practice examples of promoting a reduction in private car travel (ie TravelSmart), the spectrum of transport technologies available, urban design to optimise public transport and how communities have dramatically changed travel patterns.

Yours sincerely

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