

SUNSHINE COAST
Business Council
one vision, one voice 

The Chief Executive Officer
Sunshine Coast Council
Locked Bag 72
Sunshine Coast Mail Centre
QLD 4560
22 June 2021

BY EMAIL – masstransit@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Sunshine Coast Business Council (SCBC) herein offers the Sunshine Coast Council (Council) it's feedback on the Council's draft Options Analysis report.

SCBC recognises Council's foresight and initiative in planning for this region's future, by exploring mass transit options that will enable residents and visitors to travel around the Sunshine Coast more efficiently and sustainably, as the population within the region continues to grow. It is understood by the SCBC that we must all plan for growth, to ensure we maintain our quality of life and the regions natural amenity and landscape.

In making this submission, SCBC recognises that the draft Options Analysis is the second of three phases of the business case process and that the initial phase (the Strategic Business Case) concluded that local mass transit in the northern part of the coastal corridor is the highest priority. We recognise this is due to Council's identification of this northern area having the greatest concentration of population, jobs, facilities and services, while also (already) experiencing substantial traffic congestion. Council has clearly stated that the revitalisation of Maroochydore, Mooloolaba, Kawana and Caloundra centres are a critical basis of the Strategic Business Case, insofar as providing more jobs, attracting investment, offering more diverse housing choices and enabling more sustainable growth, into the future.

SCBC acknowledges that Council's draft Options Analysis has identified five mass transit mode options to travel along pre-determined mass transit corridors (routes), which will be further considered in a Detailed Business Case that will in turn, be the basis for obtaining State and Commonwealth funding. The SCBC further acknowledges that all feedback, views and ideas that Council receive through this public consultation process will be incorporated in the finalised Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Options Analysis, before it is considered by Council in late 2021. It is subsequently recognised that the Queensland Government will lead the Detailed Business Case process, which will include further community consultation.

Notwithstanding the above observations, SCBC takes this opportunity to outline the following three issues of principal concern, relevant to Council's current draft Options Analysis report:

1. Sunshine Coast Business Council has long called for a regional, integrated Mass Transit Strategy solution. It is our opinion that this draft Options Analysis report focuses primarily on one component of the Sunshine Coast region and does not integrate different modes into a more diversified strategy that is more far reaching, with the Sunshine Coast region.
2. Sunshine Coast Business Council acknowledges that public transport funding is limited, however a public transport strategy, by its very nature, needs to be equitable for all key growth population areas, such as Sippy downs, Buderim, Nambour, Coolum, etc. and we don't believe this is currently the case.
3. The Business Council welcomes Council identifying the importance of heavy gauge rail and we believe heavy gauge rail should be prioritised for delivery as the backbone of a truly regional transport network, with a complementary, yet subordinate network of a higher frequency transport mode enabling a finer grain connectivity within the region's broader settlement pattern.

Further to these above three points of contention, SCBC offers Council our written submission to the draft Options Analysis report's nominated mass transit options and its suggested ways in which the coastal corridor could grow and change, while preserving and promoting its attraction, character and our lifestyles.

MASS TRANSIT OPTIONS (MODE)

SCBC agrees with the opinion of the draft Options Analysis report, in that the governance of the region cannot continue with the current approach (i.e. 'business as usual'), whereby reactionary, incremental improvements to public transport operations and services are delivered in response to capacity failures caused by increased user demand and an ineffective and unpopular public transport system.

SCBC therefore supports the pre-emptive nomination by Council, to the State Government, of a high-quality mass transit system with a dedicated running way and signal priority. While it is recognised that the draft Options Analysis does not settle on any one option to take forward to the Detailed Business Case phase, SCBC agrees with the report's deliberation that a number of different types of mass transit could provide the standard of service required by the region's population growth projections.

SCBC therefore encourages Council to continue to identify and recommend to the State the most technically efficient and sustainable mode of mass transport, that will maintain its relevance and usefulness well into the future, while also best servicing the broadest area of the Sunshine Coast population centres.

We therefore support all efforts by Council to endorse mass transit mode options that will have the greatest operating efficiency, while also limiting obtrusive impacts on the existing street networks and commercially functioning route corridors.

URBAN GROWTH FACILITATION AND LOCAL PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES

It is acknowledged by SCBC that a mass transit system can help us achieve great local planning outcomes, as we grow. It is agreed that more people on a high-quality public transport service presents the opportunity to grow, renew and revitalise local areas, close to the transit stops or stations.

SCBC agrees with the draft Options Analysis report, insofar as the mass transit system can enable urban revitalisation in the form of (but not limited to):

- vibrant local community hubs;
- activities clustered around places of heightened connectivity and convenience; and
- a greater range of housing choices offering more affordable opportunities for people to enjoy what the coast has to offer.

However, it is also recognised by SCBC that intentions to increase population density along the coast (aligned with the identified urban corridor) have already attracted community concern and opposition. Within the draft Options Analysis report, it seems that the anticipated community concerns with increased residential development (including increased height) are predominantly addressed by way of reference to opportunities to create lifestyle communities in clusters along the future mass transit system corridor, while suggesting these could be in the form of more compact communities, but without the need for excessive heights that might be unfavourably compared to the Gold Coast skyline.

SCBC agrees and supports Council on the principle of identifying and enabling specific nodes along the identified urban corridor, that could readily accommodate uplifts in intensity of development and therefore create vibrant local community hubs that offer a much greater range of more affordable housing choices and increased levels of local convenience. However, in regard to creating these development nodes along the urban corridor, SCBC anticipates that the Detailed Business Case will have to be prepared in parallel with Council's drafting of a new Planning Scheme, and that Council will need to compulsorily acquire land to enable delivery of the public open space and community infrastructure required to support increased density within the coastal corridor. Park and ride facilities on the fringe of the coastal corridor, within walking distance of a Mass transit system, will also be important to its function and similarly require the acquisition of land, for the community purpose.

SCBC is therefore cognisant of the significant urban-change challenges that will confront Council, when pursuing the identified local planning aspirations along the identified urban corridor.

While it is noted by SCBC that Council is inviting the community to have a say on the draft Options Analysis Report regarding the different ways in which the projected growth in the Sunshine Coast Urban Corridor could be accommodated, in association with future placemaking opportunities of existing urban areas along the identified mass transit Phase 1 route (the urban corridor), the SCBC does not believe that such investigations should be undertaken at the expense of also exploring options to connect the so-called existing greenfield developments into the commercial and recreational centres of Caloundra, Kawana and Maroochydore.

SCBC recognises Council's communicated position that mass transit is part of Council's strategic plan for future public transport systems to meet the entire regions needs, including the upgrading of the existing regional heavy rail line running from Beewah to Nambour and a new heavy rail connection linking Beewah to Caloundra, Kawana and Maroochydore along the already identified and protected Caboolture and Maroochydore Options Study (CAMCOS) corridor.

However, SCBC does not agree with the inference made by the draft Options Analysis Report that making a priority of linking Aura, Harmony and even Beerwah East to our current employment and recreation hubs, by way of new public transport links, will accelerate a trend towards urban expansion (urban sprawl). Rather, SCBC advocates that such a prioritisation should be a leading contributor to the reduction of the Coast's current (and increasingly high) dependency on private car transport and a critical means of arresting growing levels of road congestion.

With regards to the draft Options Analysis report's pre-determined route (Urban Corridor) and the nominated staging of delivery, SCBC acknowledges that Council is aiming to promote the

accommodating of significant proportions of future population growth within the coastal corridor, while still maintaining a recognisable low-key Sunshine Coast character. The report states that *“a balanced approach to urban change is required, that protects the lifestyles enjoyed by current residents, while providing opportunities for their descendants, as well as new residents to enjoy a low-key Sunshine Coast lifestyle with local employment opportunities”*.

In reviewing the draft Options Analysis report, SCBC is conscious that the aforementioned “balanced approach to urban change” needs to be facilitated by an entirely separate (albeit complementary) process of rewriting the current Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme, such as to enable substantial population increases within the urban corridor (predominantly) and thereby facilitate relatively high levels of public (mass transit) transport patronage.

To this effect, the forecast population growth within the Coast’s urban corridor – which is required to support a successful mass transit system – is heavily reliant on broad-scale changes to planning provisions that have not yet been fully explored. Such considerable investment would therefore be subject to market acceptance and the volatility of community expectation. While categorised in the Options Analysis report as a ‘soft’ constraint, land fragmentation within the coastal corridor could substantially stymie infill growth in the short to medium-term, despite efforts to incentivise redevelopment through future planning exercises including rezoning, improved community infrastructure, increased building heights and higher density allowances.

MASS TRANSIT ROUTE (URBAN CORRIDOR) LIMITATIONS

As mentioned earlier in this submission, the SCBC recognises that the earlier Strategic Business Case concluded that local mass transit in the northern part of the coastal corridor is the highest priority, due to Council’s identification of this area having the greatest concentration of population, jobs, facilities and services, while also (already) experiencing substantial traffic congestion. However, SCBC makes the observation that the rapidly developing master planned communities of Caloundra South and Palmview are fast accommodating a significant concentration of regional population and, in the very near future, community facilities and economic hubs. It is the consideration of SCBC that a significant amount of traffic congestion on Kawana Way and Nicklin Way can be attributed to these current, high growth areas and their residents travelling throughout the Sunshine Coast region, for both work and recreation. As noted in Council’s draft Options Analysis report, a very small proportion of Sunshine Coast residents, including those in these “boom suburbs”, travel to Brisbane for work. Instead, the residents of these newly developing population areas travel throughout the Sunshine Coast, albeit starting and finishing their journey a considerable distance from southern point (Sunshine Coast University Hospital) of the nominated *Stage 1 local mass transit route*.

In light of the challenges presented by these current “boom suburbs”, as the media refers to both the Aura and Palmview developments, SCBC encourages Council to bring forward – and even prioritise – investigations into the delivery of regional public transport infrastructure to the areas of the Coast that are already experiencing high growth rates, so as to enable a greater extent of intra-regional connectivity.

The draft Options Analysis report’s focus on the urban corridor is dependent on an infill population base that doesn’t yet exist. This targeted, but still speculative growth corridor has been identified despite the long-term and sustained population growth that is already being experienced in other parts of the region, such as Palmview and Aura, where public transport options are planned for by way of approved masterplans, though do not yet exist. While both these development sites are considered by Council to be greenfield or expansion development sites, they are in fact master planned development areas that are currently experiencing the majority of the coast’s construction and are therefore doing the heavy lifting, in accommodating the region’s population growth.

These master planned communities demonstrate the capacity to meet a significant proportion of the Sunshine Coast's market demand. In order to meet this sustained demand, Aura is a case in point of a rapidly developing population centre that has been master planned to accommodate regional public transport infrastructure via the recognition and dedication of a protected transport corridor, being the CAMCOS corridor. This corridor has been integrated into the urban fabric of Caloundra South / Aura and is intended to effectively and efficiently shift significant residential populations from Caloundra South and the future development of Beerwah East, to the Sunshine Coast's commercial hubs and iconic destinations, such as its beaches, entertainment and retail centres.

However, it is apparent that the functional capabilities of CAMCOS, to facilitate the movement of residents between Sunshine Coast destinations, is not considered by the draft Options Analysis report. Rather, the report states that "the Queensland Department of Transport & Main Roads (DTMR) will investigate this as part of the implementation of its North Coast Regional Transport Plan".

SCBC is therefore wishes to register its concern, that the draft Options Analysis report does not comprehensively investigate opportunities to deliver supporting forms of complementary public transport infrastructure that is able to service the current major growth areas on the Sunshine Coast, by linking these development areas to Caloundra, Kawana and Maroochydore.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- SCBC requests that the final Options Analysis report recommendation to the State reflects the most technically efficient and sustainable mode of mass transport, that will maintain its relevance and usefulness well into the future, while also being adaptable to best servicing the broadest area possible, of the Sunshine Coast population centres;
- SCBC requests that the final Options Analysis report acknowledges the need to deliver public transport infrastructure that services the current major growth (expansion) areas on the Sunshine Coast, further to the current investigations, which focus solely on potential future consolidated growth within the coastal corridor; and
- SCBC requests that the final Options Analysis report investigates opportunities to deliver supporting forms and modes of complementary public transport infrastructure, that is capable of servicing current and future population areas beyond just the identified coastal corridor.

Regards,

Sandy Zubrinich

Sandy Zubrinich

Chair, Sunshine Coast Business Council

P.O. Box 1312, Maroochydore QLD 4558

Email info@scbusinesscouncil.com.au

WEB www.scbusinesscouncil.com.au