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Transport for Canberra Submissions
Transport Planning
Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate
Canberra City ACT 2601

By email

Draft Transport for Canberra Policy

GNCA is surprised and concerned that the draft Transport for Canberra policy has been released independently of and in advance of the Draft Act Planning Strategy. We consider it vital that an integrated approach be taken to planning issues. Transport is an integral part of planning and future policy should be considered in the context of the Government's overall planning strategy which is yet to be settled. GNCA's comments therefore need to be considered as preliminary and subject to revision once the overall planning strategy has been determined.

The main points that GNCA has to make at this stage are as follows:

- We support in general terms the broad directions that have been identified in the draft policy – namely introducing improved and more frequent bus services on major routes, encouragement of more active travel, exploration of and planning for the future introduction of light rail and encouraging the development of high speed train services to the ACT. Indeed, we think that more effort could be into pursuing the latter than currently appears to be the case.
- The Government should be working much more closely than it appears to be doing with the Queanbeyan and other neighbouring local government authorities on transport issues. The projected growth of Queanbeyan/Jerrabomberra, Bungendore, Googong and other areas to the south of Canberra, and the associated explosion in commuter traffic, is going to put great pressures on the arterial routes into the ACT, especially Canberra and Wentworth Avenues. There is little evidence in the draft policy document that the Government has a strategy to deal with this.
- Consideration needs to be given to providing either a rapid transit or a frequent bus service along Canberra Avenue from Queanbeyan and Fyshwick to Manuka and thence to State Circle, Commonwealth Avenue and Civic. It appears from the draft document that this is not envisaged which is extraordinary given that virtually all of this route is zoned for office, commercial and medium to high density residential developments. We note in this connection that Manuka and areas close by is a major destination for many people given the shops, schools, other businesses, cinema

complex, Manuka Oval (to be upgraded), and the Manuka Pool. It also attracts considerable numbers of tourists. We suggest that the provision of public transport along Canberra Avenue is a particularly relevant example of issues on which the Government should be more actively working with the Queanbeyan Municipal Council to find solutions to emerging problems and needs.

- GNCA has reservations about cyclists sharing pathways with pedestrians because of the dangers posed to pedestrians, especially children, the frail and the elderly. GNCA recommends that in future emphasis be put as far as practicable on segregating cycling routes from pedestrian traffic and also from vehicular traffic.
- GNCA is strongly opposed to allowing cycling in pedestrian plazas and malls, in Town and Group Centres and also in local shopping centres.
- GNCA supports measures such as the provision of better infrastructure to encourage more active travel but we are, in general, opposed to the use of increased parking fees, traffic levies or special taxes /surcharges on vehicle purchases as a way of encouraging behaviour change. If any of these sorts of incentives are under consideration, it is absolutely essential that they be well thought out, trialled to establish their efficiency, effectiveness and equity and are ones that are appropriate and bring genuine benefits for all of the Canberra community. It needs to be remembered that Canberra does not have the same traffic congestion problems as are experienced in much larger cities such as Sydney and Melbourne, that travel by motor car is the only practicable option for many people in Canberra for a variety of reasons, and that ease of getting about by car is one of Canberra's principal attractions for many of its residents.
- GNCA suggests that there would be value in better defining Action's intended role.

Is it to be primarily one of ensuring that the more socio-economically disadvantaged sections of the community have a more effective means of transport?

Or

Is it providing a fast, efficient, affordable and frequent transport option for high demand users of transport living in higher density areas close to major routes and so encouraging a significant move from car to public transport use?

We have some doubts whether both objectives can be achieved at once, as Action is currently attempting to do. Further consideration of these issues would assist the identification of policy responses that best meet Canberra's needs. In this context, consideration should be given to whether transport for the socially disadvantaged is best provided by buses, or whether some alternative approach, such as subsidised taxi vouchers, would be cheaper and more effective.

- More effort should be put into discussions with the Commonwealth and NSW Governments with a view to getting a faster train service between Sydney and Canberra. This need not await the development of a Very Fast Train. A service that

delivered a reliable, three hour trip between Canberra and Sydney would be a vast improvement over the current situation.

Margaret Fanning
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