

Reference: DOC/22/98399

5 August 2022



Select Committee on Public and Active Transport
Attention: Ms Emma Johnston
Secretary to the Committee,
GPO Box 572
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Via email: sctransport@parliament.sa.gov.au

Dear Ms Johnston and the Committee

RE: WRITTEN SUBMISSION AND ORAL REPRESENTATION TO SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC AND ACTIVE TRANSPORT

I write on behalf of the Mount Barker District Council district with regard to the above Select Committee that has been formed to inquire into and report on Public and Active Transport and seek to make the following submission.

The Mount Barker District has experienced rapid growth in urban development over the past 12 years since the State Government rezoning of 1300 hectares of land immediately to the south of the Mount Barker township. The ultimate development of the rezoned land is expected to double the township population to approximately 60,000 over approximately the next 20 years.

Public Transport to Service the Mount Barker District

The 2010 State Government rezoning of land in Mount Barker occurred without a viable short or long term transport plan for Mount Barker/Hills residents.

Public Transport (PT) services are vulnerable in equal proportion to private cars and freight to incidents on the South Eastern Freeway (SEF). Rightly or wrongly this affects the desirability of using PT services.

The lack of alternative route to the SEF and its interface with the arterial road network downstream of the Tollgate (Cross, Glen Osmond and Portrush Roads) acts to deter higher utilisation and demand for PT services.

Within the Mount Barker growth area, Heysen Boulevard is intended to be a key linking road that is needed in order to connect the new communities with the arterial road network (Bald Hills, Wellington, Flaxley and ultimately Adelaide Roads). Heysen Boulevard is also the State Government designated PT route to service the Mount Barker growth area.

As a result of the State Government determining that the road be delivered in a piece-meal fashion by developers, the construction of Heysen Boulevard remains incomplete some 12 years since the rezoning of land. Only a little over half of the total road length of 9.6 kilometres has been completed. Council submits to the Select Committee that there is a need for State Government leadership to now expedite the delivery of the balance of Heysen Boulevard. This is not only in relation to PT but also from a community safety perspective. The impacts of the current constructed sections (resulting in a series of no through roads) include slower emergency service vehicle response times and increased congestion on the local road network.

Infrastructure SA Mass Transit Report

The South Australian Government requested Infrastructure SA to independently investigate and report on passenger transport solutions. In January 2022, Infrastructure SA issued its Mount Barker Mass Transit Study Summary Report and Recommendations. (<https://www.infrastructure.sa.gov.au/our-work/independent-advice/ISA023-MBMT-Report-Corrected.pdf>)

At its' meeting on 7 February 2022, Council acknowledged and supported all of the recommendations of the Infrastructure SA report. Council submits these to the Select Committee for consideration as part of the inquiry. A summary of the recommendations are enclosed at the end of this letter.

Council also resolved to highlight disappointment that freight was excluded from the Study scope and that rail options do not appear to have been adequately explored and considered as yet, and concerns in relation to the need for both short term actions like the completion of Heysen Boulevard and robust long term transport infrastructure planning and solution implementation (including PT).

The Infrastructure SA report draws upon technical reporting which reviewed 48 mass transit configurations for bus and rail along existing and new routes.

Many of the options considered by Infrastructure SA need to grapple with road and rail corridors that have considerable terrain challenges. Accordingly, the "Cost" component of the "Benefit : Cost" ratio is typically very high. Consequently, Infrastructure SA's consultants have assessed that none of the options are economically viable as the ratio of Benefit : Cost falls below 1.0.

The reporting further notes that none of the PT options considered would be expected to significantly increase PT patronage. Council submits that this finding suggests that in order for investment options to yield better benefit:cost ratios, the options under consideration need to be re-crafted to yield greater benefits to the wider network and commuters to offset the estimated cost of the options due to terrain.

SEF as the only route to the city – lack of Asset Redundancy

The Infrastructure SA report notes that “The corridor is more important than the mode” and in that context states the SEF itself has enough capacity to meet projected demand until 2036 (14 years). It is important to recognise that this capacity at 2036 represents only 50% of the forecast total growth in Mount Barker and is limited by the current capacity of the Tollgate intersection and Glen Osmond Road. Further, these constraints operate at capacity in peak periods now (2022) and therefore impact on the performance of the SEF immediately upstream. There is no alternate route to the city from Mount Barker (asset redundancy) and any bus based PT solution is therefore also constrained.

The SEF is the primary highway connection between Adelaide Hills communities and the inner metropolitan areas and Adelaide CBD. It is a critical asset for daily commuting and PT services but also in times of emergency. Despite the importance of the highway, there is currently no level of redundancy should the asset be impacted by an incident or emergency. The limited entries and exits from the highway means any incident (major or minor) has an almost immediate impact on flow, especially during peak periods. This impacts PT patronage figures and performance of the service currently.

The reporting notes that any widening works or other interventions to increase capacity or accommodate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) solutions will be highly disruptive. Without an alternate road corridor, incidents on the SEF will invariably be disruptive. Council therefore submits to the Select Committee that a key consideration for PT services is not just the mode of service or the frequency of it but the route it takes. This triggers thought as to the creation of an alternate route and provision of capacity in a corridor separate to the section between Crafers and the Tollgate intersection and broader arterial road network not just for light or heavy rail but all traffic and therefore PT Services. Such an alternate would defer or could potentially remove the need for disruptive widening and duplication of lanes and tunnels on the current route to the inner metropolitan area. An alternate route for all corridor users means the benefits of an investment may begin to yield a benefit:cost ratio exceeding 1.0 if wider benefits are returned. That is, thinking and investigations around heavy investment in an alternate route to give asset redundancy has merit.

The destination of commuters is also dispersed. Not all commuters seek to end up in the Adelaide CBD. This further reinforces the Study concluding that a bus service (BRT) is the preferred public transport model.

Other Infrastructure SA recommendations of note include that the Government invest in further Park n Ride facilities. Additional Park and Ride facilities are needed across the new urban areas of Mt Barker and Nairne to give easy access to PT services. The Ministerial Transport Deeds between the State Government and a number of the Mount Barker growth area developers includes commitment to the construction of potentially 3 locations for completion by 2022. Council submits to the Select Committee that State Government leadership is needed to expedite the planning and delivery of these facilities to support and encourage increased PT service utilisation.

Importantly the Study recommends that Government undertake “a comprehensive study that considers all modes of transport, including freight, that identifies the preferred corridor solution to enable more efficient and reliable access to Adelaide from the Hills for all modes of transport.”

With a potential increase in PT services through BRT services on the SEF to support the growth in the Mount Barker district, commuter safety is a parallel consideration for the Select Committee’s inquiry when considered alongside the past and recent heavy vehicle incidents at the bottom of the freeway. Such an incident involving a bus held up in traffic could be catastrophic and lends further weight to the need for action and improvements to the corridor capacity, asset redundancy and road safety.

On Demand Services

The Keoride trial (<https://www.sa.keoride.com.au/service-areas>) in Mount Barker, Nairne and Littlehampton has been a resounding success and the trial has been extended. Council submits that the success of this service has been demonstrated and rather than extending the “trial” a permanent service needs to be established for the aforementioned zone. Additionally the service, we submit, should extend to a wider group of townships (eg Meadows, Macclesfield, Echunga, Prospect Hill, Brukunga, Callington, Kanmantoo, Harrogate, Hahndorf, Dawesley) to provide stronger reliable and more frequent connection of the outer peri-urban areas to mass transit routes from Mt Barker to the city. We further submit, an extension of operating hours for all areas beyond 9pm on a weekday and beyond 7pm on the weekend is needed.

Active Transport

Council and its land development partners have invested extensively in active transport through the highly valued trail network that is being built jointly by Council and the development industry. Council submits to the Select Committee that the benefits of encouraging more uptake of active transport is vital for the following reasons:

- Facilitates passive exercise through active transport as an alternative to car trips
- In other states (NSW) it has been reported that a very high percentage of the government health budget can be attributed to a lack of exercise and therefore by increasing active transport participation can deliver tangible and measurable reductions in health spending.
- Enables a reduction in the short car trip (<2km)
- Very modest (+5%) increases in the adoption of Active Transport in lieu of car travel at peak hour can be equivalent to the reduced congestion at peak hour traffic that we sometimes enjoy, for example, during school holidays.

With the above benefits in mind Council submits that there is a need for :

- Increased investment in grant programs to deliver cycleways and safe opportunities to increase participation,
- Investment in policy standards, design guides (e.g. similar to NSW Cycleway Design Toolbox), to build capacity in the local government sector to plan and deliver projects,

- Increase education and investment in programs to make it safe and encourage those who otherwise wouldn't contemplate use of cycleway
- Development of mapping tools for cycleways,
- Development of community cycling courses and bike maintenance
- Develop education programs to further educate motorists to see the positive of more people on bikes i.e. more people on bikes makes for less congestion and a smoother run in cars
- Increased incentive in the planning and design of active transport infrastructure to develop a program of projects that can be implemented to grow the active transport network
- Validate and build upon the connection between public transport opportunities and active transport – ie cycle to a safe and secure public transport node
- Council submits that there is uncertainty around the legalities of the use of e-scooters on footpaths and also roads and that clarity is needed.

Regional Transport Planning and work by Others

With respect to the wider transport planning in our Region, the Select Committee may like to refer to some key reports that touch more deeply on the matters that relate to their inquiry via the following links:

Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula Regional Public Transport Study (RDA, April 2019)

https://rdahc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019-04-08_RDA_Regional_Public_Transport_Study_Final_Report-1.pdf

People Transport Solutions for the Adelaide Hills (RDA, September 2021)

https://rdahc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/People-Transport-Solutions-for-the-Adelaide-Hills_Sept-2021.pdf

Rail Public Transport Options for Mount Barker and the Adelaide Hills (Rod Hook and Associates, December 2021)

https://www.mountbarker.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0035/1079297/Media-Release-RDA-Rail-Opportunities-Report-11-December-2021.PDF

Southern and Hills LGA Regional Transport Plan (November 2021)

https://www.lga.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/1141572/2030-S-and-HLGA-Regional-Transport-Plan-Final-Report-Parts-A-and-B-Combined.pdf

With regard to active transport, the Mount Barker District Council has seen the value of cycleways and active transport for many years now through the development of an extensive trail and cycleway network. We are always seeking ways to improve the network and encourage participation in this healthy activity.

With regard to Public Transport, this too is an incredibly topical issue for our growing township and wider district. The Mount Barker region has proven to be a popular and fast growing place to live and with that comes a desire to have access to frequent,

reliable, fast and affordable transport to the city and wider metro areas. The ideas submitted in this letter reflect those wants and needs.

I appreciate the opportunity to express our Council's ideas on these matters relating to the Select Committee inquiry and in addition **register our interest in presenting oral evidence to the Committee.**

Should you require further discussion or information with regard to our submission, please contact Matthew Dawkins, Manager Infrastructure Planning on 8391 7200 or mdawkins@mountbarker.sa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Stuart', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Stuart
Chief Executive Officer

Infrastructure SA Mass Transit Report Summary Recommendations:

ISA recommendations

Make public transport more convenient

The low level of bus patronage is potentially due to buses not adequately servicing the catchment area and destinations outside of the CBD, travel time relative to that by passenger car, suitability of current timetables and amenities of the current service. ISA recommends government:

- redesigns and reschedules current bus services to broaden catchment and destination options, increase frequency and integrate with Keoride and other services
- invests in Park n Ride facilities at strategic locations along the corridor
- prioritises renewal of Adelaide Hills bus fleet
- implements a regional bus stop improvement program to provide adequate shelter from Hills weather for all commuters.

Improve local road network to make public transport more accessible

A better functioning local road network would provide quicker access to Park n Ride facilities to reduce overall travel time via public transport. ISA recommends government:

- completes an Adelaide Hills roads study to improve connections to public transport
- addresses the infrastructure deed shortcomings to bring forward completion of Heysen Boulevard in Mount Barker.

Improve incident response to make the South Eastern Freeway more reliable

Operational measures and policy settings can improve incident response to minimise travel time delays. ISA recommends government implements:

- smart motorway technology and infrastructure along the SEF, such as automatic removable gates, to enable swift contraflow and open capacity in response to incidents
- a standby tow truck fleet located along SEF to address incidents and breakdowns without delay.

Targeted investment in Glen Osmond Road to improve efficiency and bus prioritisation

Ongoing investigations by DIT are focusing on improving bus transit along Glen Osmond Road as well as the Tollgate intersection. ISA recommends government pursues a program of targeted investment along Glen Osmond Road to improve traffic efficiency and bus prioritisation.

Identify the appropriate long-term corridor solution

ISA recommends government:

- undertakes a comprehensive corridor study that considers all modes of transport, including freight, that identifies the preferred corridor solution to enable more efficient and reliable access to Adelaide from the Hills for all modes of transport
- considers how an ultimate solution may be staged to incrementally realise benefits earlier.

Make decision-making more transparent

Improved and ongoing community engagement should be a key priority. ISA recommends government ensures affected parties are heard and remain informed of progress to address transport issues.