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13 January 2023

Department for Infrastructure and Transport
Via email: DIT.Engagement@sa.gov.au

Dear Community Relations Team

RE: Mount Barker and Adelaide Hills Transport Study

Council thank the Department for Infrastructure and Transport (the Department) for the opportunity to comment on the Mount Barker and Adelaide Hills Transport Study.

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

Council has for years advocated for a range of transport related improvements within the Council area and broader district. The following submission seeks to bring to the attention of the Department the transport related issues identified by staff and where previously endorsed by Council.

Public Transport to Service the Mount Barker District

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 that there is a need for 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 State 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. Earlier this year at a Council meeting on 7 February 2022, Council acknowledged and supported all of the recommendations of the Infrastructure SA report.

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 report 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 freeway 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 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 Mount 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 three locations for completion by 2022. Council supports any opportunity 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 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 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 Mount 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 outlines 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 the eastern states 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 cycle ways 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 cycle ways,
- 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, DIT may like to refer to some key reports that touch more deeply on the matters that relate to the specific subject matters including:

- Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula Regional Public Transport Study (RDA, April 2019)
- People Transport Solutions for the Adelaide Hills (RDA, September 2021)
- Rail Public Transport Options for Mount Barker and the Adelaide Hills (Rod Hook and Associates, December 2021)
- Southern and Hills LGA Regional Transport Plan (November 2021)

There are also a number of examples of identified infrastructure improvements that community have brought to Councils attention and these include:

- SE Freeway managed motorway – variable speed signs on approach to interchanges especially Mount Barker.
- Review of the capacity of Adelaide Road inclusive of the Hawthorn Road intersection.
- Wellington Road – pavement condition, footpaths, crossings, storm water/kerbing and cyclist provisioning.
- Flaxley Road – pavement condition, drainage, crossings to and from trails, Hurling Road intersection, Bollen Road intersection and cyclist provisioning.
- Old Princes Highway (Littlehampton) pedestrian crossings near Anembo Park
- Woodside Road, Nairne (from railway to North Road) – drainage, pedestrian crossings, kerbing, shoulder condition, lighting and bus stops.

- Mount Barker Road into Totness – drainage, kerbing, parking, accidents, Follett Road intersection and drainage.
- Princes Highway (Nairne Mainstreet) pedestrian crossing.
- Hahndorf heavy vehicle bypass.
- Mass transit public transport.

Council is supportive of the State Governments continued investment within Mount Barker and the Adelaide Hills inclusive of the projects currently underway such as but not limited to the Hahndorf Township Improvements and Access Upgrade Project, the Adelaide Hills Productivity and Road Safety Package, planning for a new dedicated express bus service, fleet and depot, expanding the Crafers Park 'n' Ride, and planning for a Bridgewater Park 'n' Ride, upgrades to the South Eastern Freeway (Smart (Managed) Motorway (Stage 2) to reduce the impact of traffic incidents on traffic flow, improvements to the Heysen Tunnels, review into the Mount Barker Infrastructure Deed and planning for future upgrades to Adelaide Road, Flaxley Road, Wellington Road and the Heysen Boulevard and the business case for a Greater Adelaide Freight Bypass.

We look forward to receiving a summary of this current community consultation and continuing to work with the Department to ensure improved transport within Mount Barker and the Adelaide Hills region. Council acknowledge the ongoing beneficial relationship with the Department regarding a number of projects and look forward to this continuing. Should the Department require any further technical advice please contact staff accordingly.

We have attached Councils endorsed Transport Lead Strategy (September 2022). This Lead Strategy sets the foundations for how we plan to manage transport in Mount Barker. It will assist to 'set the tone' for future transport initiatives and ensures compatibility with the Councils Community Plan and other Lead Strategies being developed by Council.

Please contact Matthew Dawkins, Manager Infrastructure Planning, by email on mdawkins@mountbarker.sa.gov.au or 8391 7218 should you have any questions in relation to this submission.

Yours sincerely



Phil Burton

GENERAL MANAGER – INFRASTRUCTURE