

28 January 2014

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission to Inquiry into the role of public transport in delivering productivity outcomes

The Committee for Perth, established in 2006 is an influential, member based organisation driven by Perth's business and community leaders. We promote and enable change that improves the cultural diversity, economic prosperity, sustainability and world class amenity of Perth.

Thank you for the invitation to provide a submission to the Inquiry as the Committee for Perth has a very strong interest in the future of transportation in Perth. Our focus is because it is well established, nationally and internationally, that economic prosperity, the efficiency of urban form and the quality of life in our cities is shaped by their transportation systems.

It is our informed view that the cities that are most successful in maximising the efficiency of their transportation systems do so as part of a wide, integrated program aimed at creating a more prosperous and liveable city – outcomes that benefit the economic prosperity of the nation as a whole.

In this context we believe that the connectivity of our cities is an issue of national significance and that governments which actively invest in improving the connectivity of cities are investing in the economic prosperity of our cities and quality of life of its citizens.

Response to the Terms of Reference

The need for an integrated approach to addressing road and rail transportation in Australia's major cities is clearly evident. Cities are the major drivers of economic growth and productivity in Australia, and there is a strong and well established link, outlined in a vast body of research that clearly establishes the link between transportation efficiency and city productivity.

We attach a copy of Committee for Perth funded research undertaken by The University of Western Australia (FACTBase Bulletin 21) which clearly identifies the link between city competitiveness and connectivity and the role that public transport and other forms of transport and communications infrastructure play in enabling city competitiveness.

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The paper stresses the need for governments to constantly rethink and adjust their strategies to enhance the competitiveness of our cities – in the short and long term.

Australian governments at all levels have a vested interest in ensuring that cities operate efficiently and enable vibrant and productive regional economies. They also have a strong interest in ensuring that Australia's cities remain globally competitive and attractive to skilled and talented people; as well as retain quality of life for Australian citizens.

To date, planning for urban transport in Australia has mainly focused either on roads (especially car use) or public transport and these functions have often been undertaken in isolation of each other. Urban transport has not been viewed as an integrated system dealing with people, cars and freight flows (by road, rail, sea and air).

Little consideration has also been given to the impact of transportation on economic productivity, including its impact on the location, form and function of the city's employment and activity centres and on its urban form.

Since its establishment, the Committee for Perth has undertaken substantial research on urban transport systems around the world (primarily focused on public transport), and it has become clear that if Australia's cities are going to ensure that they remain competitive and productive into the future, planning for transportation and land use in an integrated manner is essential.

Most simply this is because decisions about road infrastructure affect public transport and vice versa; and planning for both roads and public transport is influenced by (and strongly influences) current and future land use and urban form.

The Significance and Benefits of Public Transport

The social and environmental benefits of public transport projects in comparison to roads are very well established nationally and internationally. These include increasing equity and personal mobility in cities; reducing fuel consumption and congestion; decreasing air pollution; providing economic and land use development opportunities; increasing property values and reducing a city's urban footprint.

Yet it is evident that to function productively, urban regions need to obtain an effective and efficient balance between road and public transport investment as well as investment in other transportation modes and communications infrastructure.

In this context it is clear that, without adequate public transport infrastructure and services, cities are likely to fail to meet their economic potential, will suffer from reduced quality of life and therefore be less globally competitive.

National Importance and Funding of Public Transport

In our view it is clear that, given the importance of cities to Australia's economy, the productivity and competitiveness of Australia's cities is an issue of national significance. Therefore, given the strong and established relationship between the productivity of metropolitan regions and regional connectivity – so is public transport.

The Committee therefore believes that failure to consider public transport in Australia's cities an issue of national significance and any decision not to provide national funding to public transport projects on this basis is not only seriously remiss - it will have long term, negative consequences on the economic productivity, competitiveness and liveability of Australia's cities - to the detriment of the nation as a whole.

It is already clear that without national funding many planned public transport projects in Australia are not proceeding as anticipated, including Perth's much needed MAX light rail project.

Perth is a region of almost 2 million people and this figure is projected to increase in population to up to 5 million by the year 2050. The region already suffers from congestion travel delays second only to Sydney¹ and which are greater than the delays experienced in most cities in the United States². It is our view that failure to deliver public transport infrastructure that keeps pace with demand will see Perth become the most congested city in Australia, with serious consequences for the regional and national economy and Perth residents.

The Committee for Perth therefore urges the federal government to reconsider its position on public transport funding and hopes that this Inquiry is a positive step forward in re-instating public transportation as a key and worthy issue on the national agenda.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Marion Fulker
CEO

Attachment 1: *FACTBase Bulletin 21, Connectivity Infrastructure, Implications for Perth's Competitiveness*

¹ Tom Tom 2013, Traffic Index Australia and New Zealand, www.tomtom.com

² Tom Tom 2013, Traffic Index The Americas, www.tomtom.com