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Infrastructure Australia, Call for Submissions

Key Transport Links, East of the Derwent River, Hobart

1. Introduction

Clarence City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to Infrastructure Australia.

Tasmania is a resource rich island state that pulls well above its weight in terms of relative contribution to the nation's economy.

The topography of the island has a major impact upon the transport network and the efficiency of movement of its production to the market.

The South of the State is physically divided by a major river system (Derwent River) which flows south from the Island's heartland and is over a kilometre wide where it meets the sea.

The road and rail route to and from the north of the Island skirts the Eastern side of the central highlands plateau and approaches Hobart on the Eastern side of the Derwent Estuary.

The Hobart International Airport is located on the Eastern side of the Estuary approximately 16kms east of the City Centre.

As Tasmania's economy, both in terms of production and visitation, grows there will be increased need to cater for a greater convergence of key transport modal points such as major transport hubs and airports. There is a need to optimise the road linkages to and from these key locations to ensure the efficient and cost effective movement of freight, passengers and general commuter traffic.

The Tasmanian Government, together with private sector interests recently announced the development of a major intermodal road and rail hub to the immediate North of Hobart at Brighton. This project would see the transfer of road and rail operations to Brighton from the current location at the Port of Hobart.

This submission proposes that the current road linkages between the proposed intermodal hub and Hobart International Airport are inadequate to meet the needs or expectations of the community or industry and that inner and outer link roads to the east of the Derwent River linking these two vital facilities are required infrastructure that could be addressed by Infrastructure Australia.

2. What Are The Problems?

Hobart International Airport and the proposed Brighton Intermodal transport hub are two of the most important transport and freight hubs in Southern Tasmania.

The current roads linking these two transport hubs are the Brooker Highway, East Derwent Highway and Tasman Highway, including the Tasman Bridge.

See Figure 1



These roads currently carry significant traffic volumes and freight tonnages with Hobart Airport being the main gateway to the State with over 1.6 million passengers in 2005/06. It is also a central mode of transport for Southern Tasmania's time sensitive produce such as seafood and light freight. The Brighton hub will become the main freight handling hub in Southern Tasmania and will handle in excess of 2 million tonnes of freight annually.

With the development of the intermodal hub and Hobart Airport it is anticipated that traffic volumes between these two hubs will increase significantly within the next few years. The current routes are heavily congested, pass through densely populated residential areas and are a cause for conflict between heavy vehicle movements and passenger vehicles and pedestrians.

The problem is that there is currently no appropriate alternative road connection between the two transport hubs on the Eastern side of the Derwent that provides an opportunity to link directly between the hubs and thus reduce congestion or conflict on the Brooker Highway, Tasman Bridge, Tasman Highway or East Derwent Highway.

Whilst some preliminary work has been undertaken there has been no commitment to either a link bypass route or an outer link bypass route.

Council believes an opportunity exists to implement the planning and develop proposals to link the two hubs.

3. What Are The Impacts Of These Problems?

The impact of not having adequate road links between the hubs is that to avoid congestion and central Hobart, heavy vehicles use minor roads between Brighton and Cambridge as a short cut between Brighton and the Tasman Highway. These roads are not appropriate for heavy vehicles.

4. How Did These Problems Come About?

The problems with the current main road connections have come about due to an inability to plan for appropriate connections between what will become the two key transport hubs in Southern Tasmania.

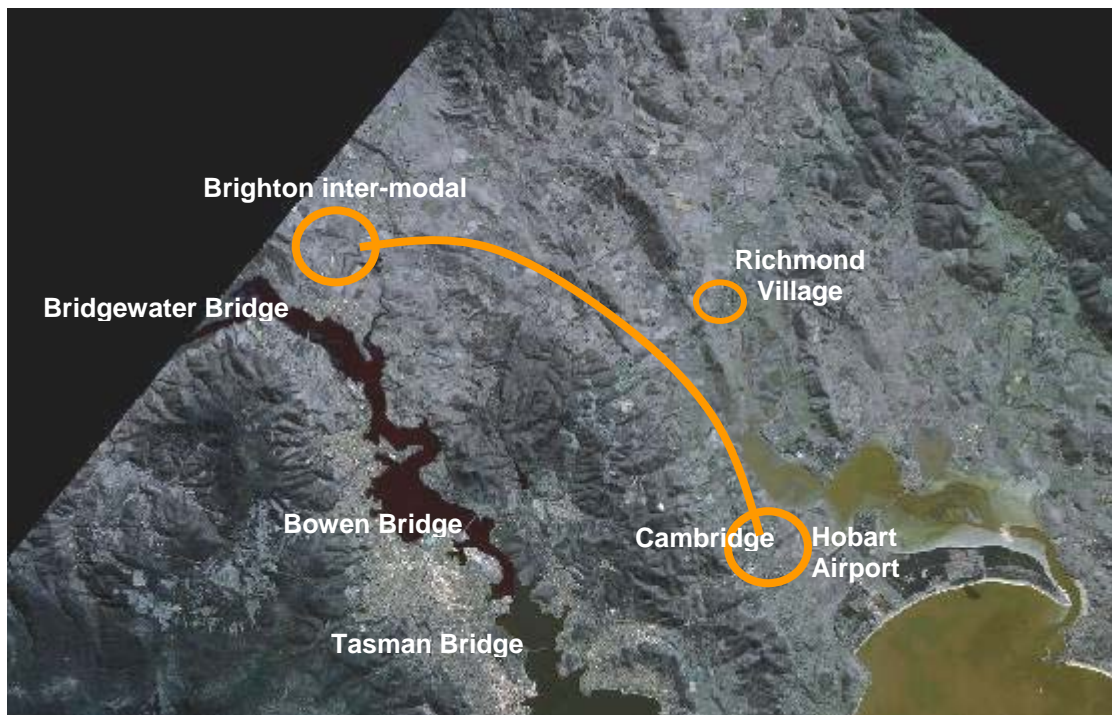
Whilst some work and planning for linkages has occurred in the past there is no specific or detailed medium term strategy to address vehicle movements between the two facilities into the future or to cater for future and expected growth.

Without this planning current major roads will continue to become more congested, the Tasman Bridge will continue to carry excessive volumes of heavy vehicles and urban residential areas will continue to be thoroughfares for heavy vehicle movements.

5. How Might The Problems Be Addressed?

In summary, the problems can be addressed by planning for and providing an inner and outer ring road link on the Eastern side of the Derwent River connecting the Midland Highway to the Tasman Highway at Cambridge (outer link) and by connecting the East Derwent Highway to Tasman Highway at Mornington (inner link, via Flagstaff Gully).

The proposed connections are shown on the following Figure 2.



The establishment of a freight corridor along the approximate alignment of the outer link from Brighton to Cambridge can be established through the Coal River Valley along existing, although substandard, roads. For example, a Richmond Road - Malcolms Hut Road – Back Tea Tree Road – Tea Tree Road route planned and appropriately upgraded would provide an appropriate solution. Another advantage of this route would be removal of significant heavy vehicle movements from the historic Richmond Village.

The East Derwent Highway and the Bowen Bridge are major Tasmanian road infrastructure assets performing well below their capacity.

The East Derwent Highway has the potential for an increased role following the establishment of the Brighton intermodal facility. However, due to substandard connections to the Bowen Bridge and the Tasman Highway, functionality is currently restricted.

This issue was recognised in 1975 when the Tasman Bridge collapsed. At that time planning for an improved connection between the Bowen Bridge and the Tasman Highway through Flagstaff Gully was commenced. With the re-establishment of the Tasman Bridge, this link was never completed.

With the growth in the Cambridge corridor and the growth of Hobart Airport and the Brighton Intermodal Hub the completion of this link is vital to the vehicle movements on the Eastern Shore of the Derwent.

6. Given The Situation What Should Be Done First?

The first task to be undertaken is for the detailed planning for these linkages to occur. Without such planning and subsequent reservation of these corridors for road purposes we are at risk of losing the corridors to development and thus securing the opportunity to develop these road links into the future.

7. What Next?

Clarence Council would wish to see Infrastructure Australia make available funds for the planning and establishment of these two vital road and transport links for Southern Tasmania.

The estimated cost of development of these two road links is in the order of \$20m.

Council would welcome the opportunity to submit further detailed information in support of this application if required.