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SOUTH EAST AUSTRALIAN TRANSPORT STRATEGY INC.



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Submission to Infrastructure Australia

**On behalf of
South East Australian Transport Strategy Inc.
(SEATS)**

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SEATS Executive (2005-2008)**

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1 SEATS Background

The South East Australian Transport Strategy Inc (SEATS) aims to stimulate and facilitate investment in transport infrastructure in south eastern New South Wales, eastern Victoria and the ACT region. Infrastructure of interest includes road networks, rail, airports, ports and intermodal facilities.

The SEATS region can be described as an area covering from the City of Greater Dandenong (Vic) in the south to Wollongong (NSW) in the north and to the ACT and Snowy Mountains in the west. There are approximately 2.5 million people living and working in the SEATS region or who have direct links with the region.

SEATS members include Local Government (19 Councils), regional development organizations, government agencies, regional industries and transport companies, a university campus and port corporations. Currently, SEATS has in excess of 40 members.

The operation of SEATS is guided by a Business and Marketing Plan to generate broad awareness of the issues relating to the development of transport infrastructure, to promote the benefits of such development and to communicate the work of SEATS members by improving access to decision makers and by providing information.

South eastern Australia is rich in primary resources, has a skilled labour force and a wealth of natural assets. Inadequate transport infrastructure is impeding orderly development with hundreds of millions of dollars of identified investment being withheld from the region. Limited access is reducing the returns for existing business. Independent consultants report that that key transport improvements could generate many millions of dollars worth of investment. SEATS members have developed the South East Australian Transport Strategy. The strategy is a comprehensive review of the measures necessary to improve transport access to Gippsland, Western Port, the Snowy Mountains, the Illawarra region, the south coast of NSW and the Australian Capital Territory.

SEATS vision is that “the south east Australia region, between Wollongong and Dandenong, will have high quality transport links forming a regional network that facilitates economic growth and production and enhances the lifestyle of the region’s population”.

2 Transport Network Problems and Impacts

The road network comprises National, State and Local roads all of which combine to provide connectivity to underpin economic activity and social connectivity. The SEATS region is comprised mainly of regional Councils most of whom have constrained rate bases (low population and socio economic capacity) to support the extent of road infrastructure they are responsible for. The local road network provides, in particular, access for product for processing and provides local connectivity.

For Local Government, particularly in regional areas, maintaining the existing network and providing for asset renewal is a substantial challenge. Maintaining Roads to Recovery funding is essential to providing the appropriate standard of road and bridge network to meet local freight tasks. Roads to Recovery and Regional AusLink funding provide resources for network upgrades and extension and should be retained. It is pleasing to note that Roads to Recovery funding has been extended for a further five years.

There is currently a lack of transport network planning at a Regional and State level to facilitate project planning and setting of priorities. Where network planning also incorporates economic analysis and impact for the region this can be used as input for assessing national priorities. Lack of Regional network planning leads to ad hoc decision-making and a lack of ability to plan over a long term timeframe. Network planning also facilitates planning coordination between the various modes of transport.

It must be recognised that large projects, particularly where community consultation and environmental impacts are significant components, require long lead times to implement. The lack of forward planning over a longer planning horizon severely compromises the ability to complete projects in a timely fashion. Funding allocations for planning and projects tend to be relatively short term (1 to 2 years) whereas funding time frames need to reflect planning and project time frames often in the order of ten years and more.

Market efficiency is driving a trend to more efficient heavy vehicles which often means larger vehicles, B doubles and more recently B triples. The road network, particularly the local network, is not keeping pace with these developments thus adding to the cost of product for processing and transporting product to market.

Regional economies rely heavily on efficient transport at a competitive price. The introduction of carbon pricing will place additional pressure on fuel costs thus adding to regional cost structures. An efficient and coordinated transport network will help in ameliorating this impact.

Planning for communication networks needs to be carried out in conjunction with strategic transport routes. The introduction of Intelligent Transport Systems requires communication along major transport corridors. The introduction of (Intelligent Access Program) IAP vehicles will require that communication should be planned jointly with road network systems.

Planning and funding for Intermodal facilities has been intermittent and apparently of low priority. Intermodal facilities will enable heavy, long distance, freight to be moved on rail thereby reducing adverse impact on the road system and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Differences in state and territory heavy vehicle regulations are causing transport inefficiencies where product needs to cross jurisdictions. For example timber and milk product regularly cross between Victoria and New South Wales. Current work on providing uniform regulations is supported.

Access to ports in the SEATS region is a major cost factor for our regional economies. The provision of effective and efficient road and rail links, in particular to the Port of Port Kembla and the Port of Hastings is essential.

Regional aerodromes (many of which were a Commonwealth responsibility) place a significant burden on Local Government finances and in particular there is currently insufficient funding to provide for runway renewal and upgrade.

3 Network Definition SEATS Region

SEATS contracted Meyrick and Associates in 2007, in consultation with SEATS members, to define a strategic network for the region. A copy of the “SEATS Strategic Network: a Preliminary Definition” is available on the SEATS website. www.seats.org.au

The strategic network for the SEATS area includes the following links and facilities: -

Roads

Princes Highway (Vic & NSW)
Clyde – Five Ways Road (Vic)
South Gippsland Highway (Vic)
Strzelecki Highway (Vic)
Monaro Highway (Vic & NSW)
Federal Highway (NSW)
Barton Highway (NSW)
Snowy Mountains Highway (NSW)
Illawarra Highway (NSW)
Lanyon Drive (ACT)
Main Road 92 & beyond Nerriga (NSW)
Picton Road (NSW)
Kings Highway (NSW)

Rail

Melbourne Bairnsdale (Vic)
Moss Vale – Port Kembla (NSW)
Moss Vale – Sydney (NSW)
Bomaderry – Sydney (NSW)
Maldon – Dombarton (NSW)

Ports

Port of Melbourne (Vic)

Port of Hastings (Vic)

Port of Eden (NSW)

Port of Port Kembla (NSW)

Intermodal Facilities

Dandenong Intermodal (Vic)

Gippsland Logistics Precinct (Vic)

Moss Vale Intermodal (NSW)

Goulburn Intermodal (NSW)

This strategic network, and associated facilities, has been identified by SEATS members as the essential connectors and elements that underpin economic development and social wellbeing in the region. It is intended that the strategic network be used as a planning tool by Federal, State and Local Government in determining priority projects and assist in setting priorities for project funding.

In selecting the strategic network SEATS members agreed that at least three of the criteria below would need to be met.

The link or infrastructure must be

1. Essential to the internal connectivity between at least two local government areas within the SEATS Region
2. A strategic point of intermodal transfer
3. Essential to the efficient operation of domestic and international markets
4. A strategic route for two or more major industries in the SEATS Region
5. Essential to mitigate relative poor transport accessibility issues in the SEATS Region
6. Supported financially and politically by more than one level of government and/or a significant private sector involvement
7. Essential to the transport amenity of the SEATS transport community.

Ref: Meyrick and Associates / GHD, SEATS Strategic network: A Preliminary Definition, 2007.

A hierarchical approach to planning would greatly aid long term planning and facilitate more informed priority setting. The transport planning process would benefit having the following studies carried out:

- Network plans
- Corridor plans
- Project plans

These plans should analyse economic, environmental and social impacts in addition to benefit cost analysis in setting priorities. Impact on regional economies and provision of social connectivity is of great importance in the SEATS region.

The planning time horizon could be up to 10 years for major project planning and a 30 year time horizon for overall strategic network plans, with funding streams to match. Project plans need to be developed and “banked” to enable projects to proceed in an efficient fashion when funding becomes available.

Planning studies are often not released between levels of government, nor released to the public. To enable interested organizations to participate and assist with planning, planning documents should be released and shared with regional planning organizations to maximise the planning effort.

Provision of efficient road and rail access to regional ports (Port Kembla and Hastings) will greatly enhance freight movements and improve local competitiveness.

Continue Roads to Recovery funding, as an ongoing funding source to ensure that local road networks are maintained and renewed to enable product for processing to be efficiently transported. Roads to Recovery funding should be a core Federal Budget item in perpetuity.

Intermodal facilities should be provided at strategic locations to enable the most efficient form of transport to be utilised. This will assist in enhancing competitiveness and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Provide communication facilities along road corridors to facilitate IAP vehicles.

Continue to progress heavy vehicle regulatory reform to provide uniform interstate requirements.

5 Comment on SEATS Strategic Priorities

Regional areas contribute greatly to Australia's economic productive capacity, which is reflected in the Strategic Priorities.

The SEATS region, being to a large extent coastal in nature, is a major retirement destination resulting in significant coastal urban development, in addition the coast line is also a very popular tourist destination and is part of the South Eastern Tourism route. The Latrobe Valley is the main energy production area for Victoria and also has extensive reserves of brown coal. Offshore Bass Strait produces a large proportion of Victoria's gas. Given climate change considerations the Macalister Irrigation area has the potential to become a food bowl for the region. Timber production and processing and dairying together with associated value added industries make a major contribution to the SEATS area. Port Kembla, together with the Wollongong area, creates significant economic activity.

By way of example, Port Kembla has an Economic Impact Study (on the web) which indicates that every vessel that visits the port generates 5 full time jobs with \$1 million to the regional economy. The relocation of car imports from Sydney to Port Kembla will generate around 1100 regional jobs and take some 100.000 trucks per annum off Sydney streets.

The following list of priority projects has been determined by SEATS membership having defined the Strategic Regional Network within the south east region of Australia. This has been achieved by only considering those projects which connect communities, increase amenity for communities and provide connectivity for the movement of goods and services within the region and beyond.

6 SEATS Priority Projects

Project location	Description	Economic Impact	Estimated Cost
Princes Highway Improvements			
Traralgon to Sale (Part funded by Federal and State)	Duplication of the Highway from Traralgon to Sale	Heavy vehicles comprise 14% to 20% of traffic. Duplication will reduce travel times, increase safety and facilitate regional tourism.	\$800 million
Orbost to Cann River	Continue the widening of narrow sections of road, easing of curves, shoulder sealing and provision of overtaking opportunities.	Increased safety and efficiency in facilitating the movement of agricultural products and timber. Also improved facility for tourism and recreational opportunities.	\$17 million
Wollongong to Jervis Bay Intersection	Provision of dual carriageway	Provision of an efficient link between population centres and regional/interregional freight.	To be determined
Gerringong to Bomaderry	Upgrade of the highway (4 lane divided) including a bypass of Berry	Provides access for commuter traffic, tourism, local industry and agriculture.	\$1,000 million
Conjola Mountain (Work in progress)	Road realignment and provision of additional overtaking lane.	Improved safety and access and reduced travel time.	\$45 million
Victoria Creek to Dignams Creek	Provision of two new creek crossings and associated road works to improve alignment.	Improve traffic safety and efficiency. Improved access for tourism and freight.	\$60 million x 2

Project location	Description	Economic Impact	Estimated Cost
<p>Princes Highway continued</p> <p>Batemans Bay to Narooma</p>	<p>Upgrade the highway including intersection improvements at south Batemans Bay (Spine Road and Princes Highway) and other rural road intersections.</p>	<p>Improve traffic safety and efficiency. Improved access for tourism and freight.</p>	<p>To be determined</p>
<p>Wagonga Inlet</p>	<p>Improvements to the alignment and width of the northern approach to the bridge.</p>	<p>Enable efficient movement of freight by providing for B double access.</p>	<p>\$10 million</p>
<p>Brogo River bridge</p>	<p>Upgrade of bridge width and improvements to bridge approach alignment.</p>	<p>Enable efficient movement of freight</p>	<p>To be determined</p>
<p>Bega Town Bypass</p>	<p>Provide a Bypass of Bega that will allow B double access.</p>	<p>Benefit to industry and tourism.</p>	<p>\$50million</p>
<p>Clyde – Five Ways Road Duplication</p>	<p>Provision of a 4 lane divided road connecting the South Gippsland and Princes Highways.</p>	<p>Provision of inter regional connectivity to agricultural areas of South Gippsland and the tourist region of Phillip Island. Traffic volumes (12,000 to 40,000 vpd) are increasing associated with urban development.</p>	<p>\$135 million</p>
<p>Cranbourne Bypass</p>	<p>Provision of a 4 lane South Gippsland Highway bypass of Cranbourne.</p>	<p>Cranbourne has and continues to experience significant urban growth. A town bypass will improve freight, tourist, business and commuter efficiency.</p>	<p>\$13 million</p>

Project location	Description	Economic Impact	Estimated Cost
Bass Highway (Work in progress)	Continue the duplication of the Highway to the Anderson roundabout.	Supports major tourism destinations at Phillip Island. Heavy vehicle traffic generated from sand extraction, light engineering, agriculture and food industry.	\$37 million
South Gippsland Highway (Work in progress)	Continuation of the VicRoads corridor strategy for highway improvements.	The highway is a major tourism route and also supports agriculture, in particular dairy.	To be determined
Strzelecki Highway	Widening of bridges and provision of overtaking opportunities.	This highway provides north south connectivity. Main benefits are to dairy, timber, tourism and local commuters.	\$15 million
Monaro Highway (Program announced Vic section)	Carry out improvements to alignment, seal shoulders, improve pavement width and provide overtaking opportunities.	Provision of improved freight route from Gippsland into NSW. Will support agricultural product and timber movement.	\$4.5 million (Vic) Plus NSW sections)
Main Road 92 and Beyond Nerriga (Work in progress)	Completion link between Nerriga and Braidwood Planning, selection and development of a link beyond Nerriga to provide a link to Queanbeyan/Canberra.	Improved heavy vehicle access between the Shoalhaven, Illawarra, Port Kembla and southern NSW, ACT and beyond. Will also have a positive benefit for tourism.	\$30 million \$150 million
Gocup Road Tumut to Hume Highway	Upgrade of road to provide wider lanes and overtaking opportunities.	Provides safe and efficient access for timber/plantation industry.	Refer to submission from Tumut Shire Council
Kings Highway Upgrade	Works include improvements to alignment, carry out road widening and provision of overtaking lanes.	Improved access for heavy vehicles resulting in reduced travel times and reduced freight costs. Also will provide improved access for tourism.	\$15 million

Project location	Description	Economic Impact	Estimated Cost
Caulfield Dandenong 3 rd Rail Line	Provision of a third track between Caulfield and Dandenong including dual broad and standard gauge compatibility.	Provide improvements to passenger and freight services. The passenger service is operating at capacity, the 3 rd track will free up capacity for freight which is currently restricted to off peak periods.	To be determined
Gippsland Logistics Precinct Morwell	The development of the Gippsland Logistics Precinct adjacent to the former Gippsland Intermodal Freight Terminal to provide a multi user facility for the region. Provision of additional siding and related infrastructure.	This project will enable Gippsland industry to load freight in a central location for transport to the Ports of Melbourne and Geelong. Increased utilisation of rail and decreased business costs. Reduces heavy vehicle usage on Princes Highway	Funding of \$16 million to establish infrastructure on the site
Regulatory Review School Bus System (Vic) (currently progressing)	Review of regulations to facilitate multi use of school bus infrastructure in rural areas.	Provision of improved passenger services linking towns. Carry out study and develop implementation plan	\$150,000
Port Kembla Container Terminal	Improvement of road and rail access to the port including intersection improvements. Improvements to Picton Road and Princes Highway are also requirements for efficient port access.	Will provide opportunities for manufacturing, warehousing and export/import operations.	To be determined Refer to submission from Port Kembla Corporation
Access to Port of Hastings	Provision of road and rail links from the Princes Highway to the Port of Hastings and road and rail links to the duplication of the Western Port Highway.	As a general cargo port and the State's second container port this will provide efficient freight access and improved competitiveness, in particular to the Gippsland region and beyond.	To be determined Refer to submission from Port of Hastings Corporation

Notes to table:

1. Many projects have little or no formal planning carried out and in some cases cost estimates are not available from state road authorities, costs are therefore indicative only.
2. Further information is available on the SEATS web site under current projects and presentations. www.seats.org.au
3. It is SEATS intention to provide further detail such as Business case plans for several of the abovementioned priority projects. This work will be completed by mid December 2008

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CONSTITUENT MEMBERS:

Australian Capital Territory

Capital Region Development Board
NatRoad Limited

New South Wales

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Eurobodalla Shire Council
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