



Vic Govt funds priority projects

Several SEATS priority infrastructure projects in Gippsland were included in the Victorian Government's Budget handed down just before SEATS May meeting.

VicRoads Eastern Victoria Regional Director Scott Lawrence highlighted these projects to SEATS delegates in Wollongong recently.

- **The Princes Highway East – Sand Road intersection (\$31.2m).** A full diamond interchange at the intersection of the Princes Freeway and Sand Road (between Nar Nar Goon and Longwarry North) will replace the at-grade intersection. Sand Road will pass over the freeway with ramps catering for movements between the two roads. Construction should start late 2015.
- **The Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternative Route (\$5.12m).** Leongatha is the largest town in South Gippsland Shire. Planning has been completed and the route endorsed by South Gippsland Shire Council. The route is along the existing South Gippsland Highway (Anderson Street), Roughead Street (Strzelecki Highway) and Long Street. Construction is due to start late 2015.

SEATS also welcomes funding for the con-

struction of a **major strategic rest area** for freight drivers on the Princes Highway near Murrungower (\$3.38m), 20km east of Orbst. This need was identified in SEATS Cross Border Study last year as being an infrastructure constraint and it became a SEATS Priority Project. Construction should start late 2015.

The Victorian Government had announced the previous month that an extra \$130 million over four years would be included in its 2014 Budget for the repair and restoration of roads across Victoria. These works will be above base funding levels and will ensure that high priority sites across Gippsland are treated.

Feds fund Shoalhaven duplication

The 2014/15 Federal Budget was brought down just days before the recent SEATS meeting, so delegates had little chance to digest its contents beforehand.

SEATS Executive Officer Chris Vardon said most projects listed for the SEATS region had been announced previously, the exception being \$10m for the planning of an additional

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A B-double tanker passing through Leongatha's CBD shows why an alternative route for heavy vehicles is needed. Photo courtesy South Gippsland Shire Council.

NSW plans region's transport

The two NSW Regional Transport Plans relevant to the SEATS area were presented at Wollongong by NSW Transport's acting Principal Manager Active and Regional Transport Planning Kate Golotta. They are two of 10 Regional Transport Plans recently released by the NSW Government as part of its long term transport planning.

The Southern Regional Transport Plan covers LGAs from Upper Lachlan and Wingecaribee in the north, out to Tumut and to the Victorian border. 'It addresses key issues raised by communities, particularly cross-border and inter-regional connectivity issues with ACT, Victoria and the Murray-Murrumbidgee region,' she said.

'Feedback for the Illawarra Plan had a greater focus on travel time to Sydney and local travel to Wollongong and Nowra.'

Implementing these plans has already begun. 'We're working closely with the Department of Planning and Environment in the development of their Regional Growth Plans, to ensure the transport infrastructure responds to changing land use and population growth expected in the next 20 years.'

Nerriga Study done



The final report on the 'Beyond Nerriga Route Options Study' will be with SEATS by 20 June. The study tried to identify a preferred route for heavy vehicle from NSW's south coast across the escarpment west of Nerriga to link with the Monaro, Federal, King and/or Hume Highways. The cost-benefit analysis struggled to find significant differences between the three options. Potential benefits include lower grades and an alternative to Clyde Mountain and Mt Ousley. More details later.

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crossing of the Shoalhaven River at Nowra .

He said the Budget also cut local government funding significantly by freezing indexation for Financial Assistance Grants. Many councils are now reviewing their budgets for 2014-2015 to reassess spending on infrastructure and services. The shortfall could be several hundred thousand dollars for each council.

He added the continuation of Roads to Recovery funding (\$349.8m/yr. Australia wide) was welcome news although the annual funding allocation was not indexed. This has been offset in part by the introduction of new Bridges Renewal Program (\$60m/yr Australia wide).

SEATS Chairman speaks...

Last month's SEATS meeting at Wollongong had good content, attendance and interaction, and the weather was absolutely perfect.



Cr Sue Whelan

Many of the presentations are outlined in this newsletter. They included an update by Renae Elrington on the major roadworks on the Princes Highway around Gerringong, as well as an overview by Ron Collins of the NRMA's recent 'look see' along the Princes Hwy and issues affecting it.

We heard from Kate Golotta about the NSW Government's recently released Illawarra and Southern Regional Transport Plans.

We were also briefed on the NSW Government's Ports and Freight Strategy. This followed NSW Transport Minister Duncan Gay being at SEATS' November meeting and his desire for closer ties between his Department and us. While the presentation could have been made more relevant to SEATS delegates, we do look forward to working with the Department in the future and greatly appreciate the Minister's initiatives.

SEATS is currently taking a close look at what it does, how it does it and how it should operate into the future. We did a SWOT analysis at the Executive meeting at Wollongong which we then took to the general meeting. Everyone entered into the spirit of the discussion and it was fantastic to see how positive delegates were about SEATS, what it's doing and how we could boost our advocacy. We will bring this back to the next meeting which is at Sale.

We are also looking at the recruitment of a new Executive Officer when Chris Vardon retires in June 2015. Our treasurer Gordon Charles will also retire at that time but his council of East Gippsland Shire has indicated it is happy to continue to manage SEATS' finances.

There was also an update on the Beyond Nerriga Route Options Study by Steve Warrell. The final report is expected within days.

Les Dion was absolutely fascinating as our after dinner speaker talking about changes in the family's bus company over 90 years. He spoke about how the business had grown from quite humble beginnings to the modern transport company it is today.

*Cr Sue Whelan
Chairman*

Princes upgrade well underway



Part of the new bridge over the rail line at Fern Street is swung into place during the first stage of the Princes Hwy upgrade. The overbridge removes the rail level crossing, improving safety. Photo RMS.

SEATS delegates in Wollongong appreciated an update on progress of the three-stage upgrade of over 30km of the Princes Highway from Gerringong to Bomaderry by Roads & Maritime Services (RMS). 'It's all going to plan and negotiations for delivering the project are ongoing,' said RMS Southern Regional Manager Renae Elrington.

The first of the three-stages, 7.5km between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Rd, includes two new interchanges at Gerroa and Gerringong and a road bridge over the rail line. It will cost \$329m, is funded by the NSW Government, and should be completed by mid 2015.

Construction of the 11.6km second stage of the Princes Highway upgrade, including the Foxground and Berry Bypass, is still in the planning stages, but should start early 2015. Fulton Hogan was the successful tenderer (same as first stage). This new four-lane divided highway will cost \$580m. Completion is expected mid 2018.

She said the concept design for the third stage, an upgrade of 11.5km of the Princes Highway from Berry to Bomaderry, has been finalised. The upgrade would provide 11.5 kilometres of four lane highway between Schofields Lane, Berry and Cambewarra Road, Bomaderry.

NRMA Report on Princes Hwy

The NRMA had hoped to present a report at Wollongong on its recent inspection of safety aspects of the Princes Highway from Sydney to the Victorian border.

NRMA ACT Corporate Affairs manager Ron Collins said that report, done with consultants ARRB Group, should hopefully be released at the end of July.

'We did note an improvement in the engineering of some roads but obviously more work still needs to be done,' he said.

NSW structure recap

Delegates were able to consolidate their understanding of the NSW Government's structural changes and reforms to transport infrastructure planning and service delivery at the Wollongong meeting.

'It was basically a high level recap explaining the different roles under the new structure rather than anything that threw them off their chairs,' said RMS Southern Regional Manager Renae Elrington.

'I explained the structure and working relationship between Roads and Maritime Services and Transport for New South Wales.

'TfNSW's main aim is to deliver consolidated planning across agencies; it's the policy and regulations centre with overall financial responsibility.'

Roads and Maritime Services was created from a merger of the Roads and Traffic Authority and NSW Maritime. Major planning authority was transferred to TfNSW. 'RMS is accountable strategically and in every other way in delivering programs to TfNSW, including financial accountability to them.'

Renae's presentation at Wollongong 'led to interesting discussion about the technical boundaries of councils under broad change management'.

Her presentation is on SEATS website.

Election push waits on members

SEATS asks its members to please finalise updates of the priority project templates by the end of June. This update is critical for SEATS' advocacy for the upcoming Victorian elections. The status of partially completed projects could be shown graphically. Completed projects will be removed from the list.

Projects should be differentiated into key regional projects (priority projects) and local projects (supported projects).

Dion's Bus Service spans 90 years



One of Les Dion's many historic photos — passengers help Dion's 1928 Chevrolet bus (on excursion) cross the Cann River en route to Bombala. 'That was the way they had to do things in those days,' he said. Photo courtesy Les Dion .

Les Dion proved a most fascinating after dinner speaker with stories from his family's 90 years running bus services in the Illawarra. He noted the many advances to the business today.

Dion's Bus Service began in 1923 with a Ford Model T bus on the Wollongong-Balgownie run. Many photos of the company's buses over the years had SEATS delegates enthralled

Today Dion's provides scheduled route services and school bus services under contract to the NSW Government via a fleet of 15 modern buses; half with disabled access and air conditioning. It employs 32 people.

Les outlined technologies

they are embracing to improve transport efficiency and enhance user experience, e.g.:

- low floor stepless entry;
- disabled access areas for wheelchairs, prams and elderly people with frames;
- camera security;
- new ticket ticketing systems including the opal card;
- better value ticket products (in particular pensioner excursion tickets with its economic and social benefits);
- mobile travel/timetable Apps for trains and buses, noting buses will roll this out in the future.

Les' presentation is on SEAT's website.

Infrastructure planning for West Dapto

Wollongong City Council's West Dapto development planned over the next 50 years is impressive.

WCC's Infrastructure Strategy Manager Michael Malone said it will be a series of integrated communities that, when complete, will have 19,000 new dwellings, 50,000 residents, 184 acres employment land, and \$2.3 billion in private and public infrastructure, including \$0.7 billion in roads. He explained how this related to State, regional and local housing, economic and transport planning, strategies and policies.

'We worked out the absolute transport needs we had to deliver to achieve these strategies and policies, which can be quite challenging,' he said. 'In conjunction with Transport NSW and RMS, we developed in detail road requirements including connections to the freeway and the Princes Hwy. We still have work to do for public transport but we know what we want to do. One challenge is to get buses in before road dependence is reinforced.'

His presentation is on SEATS website.

What is SEATS?

South East Australian Transport Strategy (SEATS) aims to stimulate and facilitate investment in transport and infrastructure in south eastern NSW, eastern Victoria and the ACT. Its 52 members represent councils, industry and other organisations from Wollongong to Dandenong.

Kings Hwy work

Road safety improvements on Kings Hwy and stabilisation of Clyde Mountain are underway. Claims change to 80kph zone east of Braidwood has created safety hazard.

Roads Congress call

Check Communiqué from NSW Roads Congress calling on Federal and NSW Governments to increase regional road funding .

<http://www.ipwea.org/RoadsTransportDirectorate/AboutRD/Congress/>

SEATS meetings

21-22 August: Hosted by Wellington Shire Council at Sale, Vic. AGM.

6-7 November: Hosted by Shoalhaven City Council at Shoalhaven Heads, NSW.

2015

19-20 February: Hosted by South Gippsland Shire Council at Port Welshpool, Vic.

21- 22 May: Hosted by GHD in Canberra, ACT.

20-21 August: Hosted by Baw Baw Shire Council at Warragul, Vic.

SEATS Executive

Chairman Cr Sue Whelan OAM (Queanbeyan), Deputy Chairman Cr Jeanette Harding (South Gippsland), Secretary Cr Graeme Middlemiss (La Trobe), Treasurer Gordon Charles (East Gippsland).

Victorian representatives: Cr Bob Wenger (Wellington), Cr Deb Brown (Baw Baw), Cr Marianne Pelz (East Gippsland)

NSW representatives: Cr Bob Stewart (Bombala), Greg Pullen (Shoalhaven), Matthew Christensen (Tumut).