



Bridge 'stock-take' underway

A 'stock-take' of all bridges in the SEATS region is about to get underway, with the assistance of local government.

'This will allow us to better prepare a case for accessing significant Federal and State funds to upgrade critical bridges on freight routes,' said Shoalhaven Council's Greg Pullen, a member of SEATS executive.

The template for the stock-take was originally developed by GHD as part the Last Mile Bridge Study commissioned by SEATS.

'Both the Federal and State Governments announced plans late last year to channel money for this purpose,' he said. 'A few of us had an inkling this was coming and so SEATS set about early last year to do that study.'

'We realised we needed to assess all bridges in our network – their age, their condition, how critical they were, which were on freight routes and how much money was required.'

'Local government may have had had some of this information but they didn't relate it to the freight context.'

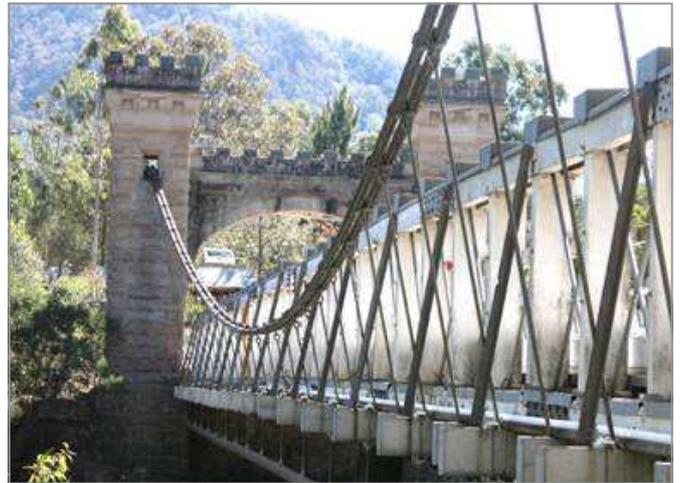
GHD had set out to create a mechanism to harvest information so data would be consistent across constituent councils.

'After a dummy run at Shoalhaven, we suggested several refinements to GHD, particularly relating to engineering particulars, so councils could complete it in a meaningful way.'

SEATS is now sending that refined template to its councils. 'We'd like that back April/May and hopefully be able to compile it in time for the May meeting,' he said.

'We also want to understand if there are any issues, such as heritage, that could cause complications.'

'The historic Hampden Bridge in the Kangaroo Valley, for example, has only one lane and at times weight limitations which means it can become the weak link in a freight network.'



Historic Hampden Bridge at Kangaroo Valley is limited to one line of traffic and is on a vital freight corridor.

Industry and SEATS meet

Gippsland log and general freight carriers met with members of SEATS executive over dinner last month to improve communication between them on industry issues.

'It's critical that SEATS has input from transport operators into their local issues and concerns; at the moment that's lacking,' said Sanmar Consulting's Mark Williams who helped organise the meeting. 'Many operators would like input into SEATS policies but it is difficult to get to meetings due to work commitments.'

He said Nola Bransgrove, a BransTrans director, has now joined SEATS which will be of great value to both the industry and SEATS; 'Nola is also a National Transport Commissioner so has a broad industry perspective.'

Other operators did not want to necessarily join SEATS due to their work and time commitments, instead preferring to discuss issues

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Motorbike crashes drop

Horrible crash rates for motorbikes in the whole Gippsland region over a five year period with resulting fatalities and trauma prompted the formation of a diverse community group to try to reduce the problem. They succeeded, especially in East Gippsland which had the worst crash record, with minimal funding and resources.

Daryl Townsend of East Gippsland Shire Council says the group consisted of motorcyclists and representatives of the six Gippsland councils, Police and VicRoads. They formed part of RoadSafe's Gippsland Road Safety Council.

'One of our first tasks was to review all crash data,' Daryl said. 'We then looked at all the contributing issues. We identified the routes with the worst crash rates and then worked collaboratively with VicRoads to have these routes assessed and appropriately upgraded.'

A large billboard trailer (see photo below) positioned on the worst routes has been particularly effective. 'They stopped crashes in their tracks,' Daryl said.

See his presentation on SEATS' website.



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via emails and internet forums.

Suggestions for improved communication between industry and SEATS included:

- making SEATS' website more interactive;
- any online questionnaire should be short and to the point;
- councillors and Council staff should gain an understanding of the day to day operations of a trucking company, possibly by travelling their shire's roads in appropriate freight vehicles to also gain an appreciation of issues on their own road network.

Operators and SEATS will contact other operators about moves to improve consultation. SEATS will hold similar dinner meetings in NSW, possibly one on the coast and another in the Capital Region. The dinner was held on the evening before the February SEATS meeting.

SEATS Chairman speaks...



At Paynesville last month, SEATS' chairman Cr Sue Whelan (Queanbeyan), front left, with Executive Officer Chris Vardon and other executive members Deputy Chairman Cr Jeannette Hardy (South Gippsland); Gordon Charles (East Gippsland), Cr Debbie Brown (Baw Baw) and Matthew Christensen (Tumut). Photo courtesy 'Bairnsdale Advertiser'.

It was a very good meeting at Paynesville, thanks to our host East Gippsland Shire Council, one of Victoria's biggest and fastest growing shires. We are seeing consistently good attendances at meetings, testimony I think to the high standard of presentations and the widespread recognition of SEATS' value.

We were delighted with the response by Victorian transport operators to a dinner meeting before the main SEATS meeting (see page 1). SEATS is keen to have industry input to our projects, but we also recognise it is difficult for operators to make day meetings. We will be acting on their feedback.

The truck rollover presentation was extremely interesting with implications for all of us (see page 3). Another great presentation was by RoadSafe Gippsland on the community's successful initiatives to reduce motor cycle crashes, injuries and fatalities. A lot of bikes come through our regions and it had some switched on ideas about keeping motor cyclists safe.

It was good to hear from the Federal Member for Gippsland Darren Chester who was our dinner speaker and has long been a good SEATS supporter.

Beyond Nerriga will come back to the next meeting which is in Wollongong, after some further work. We're also having another look at our project priorities (see page 4).

The Executive is having a planning day in May to look at future directions for SEATS and, with Chris Vardon retiring next year, what we want from a new executive officer.

*Cr Sue Whelan
Chairman*

Rollovers don't take much

Rollovers are not usually the result of truckies speeding or doing anything illegal, VicRoads Road Safety Advisor Alan Pincott told truck operators and SEATS delegates at Paynesville recently.

'They can happen to the most experienced and respected drivers, often because they have not understood what is going on,' he said.

Alan's presentation with accompanying DVD - 'Heavy Vehicle Rollover Prevention Program' - surprised many at the meeting and discussion continued long after. This is an excellent VicRoads road safety initiative designed to increase driver awareness of the contributing factors that cause rollovers.

Hundreds of truck rollovers happen every year in Australia causing significant loss of life and injuries as well as considerable damage to vehicles and goods. Already the program has resulted in a significant drop in rollovers and injuries.

'Everyone is amazed at how little it takes to roll over a truck with a high centre of gravity, like a log truck,' Alan said. 'Just 15 degrees lean from a static position and over it goes. The centre of gravity has more effect than the weight.'

'A driver can drive the same road a thousand times, and just one time he's not on the mark and over he goes. It can be something like a brick on the road, another driver, a motor bike, or a pot hole.'



A log truck has a high centre of gravity and therefore it does not take much to make it roll. Photo courtesy VicRoads.

'What surprised many was that the trailer goes first before the driver realises he's going, and then it whips the cab over.'

The DVD explains the effects of centrifugal force and the challenges of shifting liquid loads.

Alan also spoke about the need to take pressure off truck drivers so they don't feel they have to push the limits. He spoke of the difference 1kph makes. 'It can mean the difference between staying on your wheels or going over,' he said.

'Better to tell your boss you will be half an hour late than you've rolled the truck.'

Aspects of Alan's presentation also impressed some road builders at the meeting. 'It made them think more about the design of intersections and roundabouts, how tight the roundabout is, for example, drainage, shoulders, things like that,' he said.

As a result of his SEATS presentation, Alan has been asked to do a full presentation to some truck operators and councils in coming months.

The DVD can be viewed on VicRoads' website www.vicroads.vic.gov.au.

State elections loom

SEATS will prepare comprehensive documents for both the Victorian and NSW elections outlining the key projects SEATS members would like to take to the political parties in the lead up to these elections.

Each document will be similar to the one sent to all relevant candidates for the 2013 Federal election last September.

The Victorian State election is on Saturday 29 November. SEATS members are asked to advise SEATS EO Chris Vardon about what they would like included by the end of March.

The NSW State election is on Saturday 28 March 2015. SEATS members are asked to advise Chris about any projects they would like included by the end of June 2014.

New freight route not yet determined

No clear 'best' route for a future easier transport route between Yass and Nerriga on MR92 has yet emerged, despite efforts to differentiate between the three preferred options.

Project manager Steve Warrell said they hope more detailed work in the next month or so will provide a result. The final report will be presented at the next SEATS meeting.

The 'Beyond Nerriga Route Options Study' aims to identify a preferred route for heavy vehicles, including B-Doubles, from NSW's south coast across the escarpment west of Nerriga to link with the Monaro, Federal, King and/or Hume Highways (see December newsletter).

The routes considered are:

- Nerriga-Tarago-Collector-Gunning-Yass;
- Nerriga-Braidwood-Bungendore-Murrumbateman-Yass;
- Nerriga-Tarago-Bungendore-Murrumbateman-Yass.

Steve said it has been very difficult to get the information needed to model future usage of the routes. 'Current traffic volumes here are very small,' he said. 'There's no useable data on freight transport between the centres in this area. Using population data to predict future traffic



volumes unfortunately doesn't give an indication of potential freight use once the route is constructed.

'We tried to get an indication from industry of whether they'd use the route if it was developed. Most businesses were too busy or reluctant to respond because the way they travel is commercial in confidence.

Advantages to completing this 'Beyond Nerriga' route include providing:

- easier access especially for B-doubles between the Hume and the coast, particularly heading south;
- an alternative route between Canberra and the coast when there are slips on Clyde Mountain;
- alternative freight access between the Hume and Illawarra if there are problems on Mt Ousley.

SEATS has overseen the study through a technical committee with representatives of five councils, RMS and Transport for NSW.

Steve said the final report would also provide SEATS with a basis for lobbying for funds to carry this project forward.

SEATS reviews priorities and updates 'Bible'

SEATS members are asked to please check the SEATS' priority projects listed for their area and revise if required.

Please resubmit projects still considered current with any revisions and also submit any new projects for consideration using the Priority Project template to SEATS Executive Officer Chris Vardon by early May. These will then be considered at the August meeting.

Meanwhile Ralf Kastan will be revising the Strategic Network document, SEATS 'Bible', with government and policy updates. Any suggestions or comments relating to this update should also be sent to Chris Vardon.

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.

Australia Day Honours

Congratulations to SEATS Chairman Cr Sue Whelan and Warren Sharpe (Eurobodalla) for their Order of Australia awards. Well deserved.

New SEATS members

We welcome two new SEATS members — Transport Certification Australia and Branstrans, a transport company operating from Traralgon.

Cross Border study

SEATS final Cross Border Study report (see December newsletter) is now being circulated to key stakeholders including State and Federal Ministers and Members, local government and industry.

SEATS meetings

15-16 May: Hosted by Wollongong City Council in Wollongong.

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

6-7 November: Hosted by Shoalhaven City Council at Nowra.

2015

19-20 February: Hosted by South Gippsland Shire Council.

SEATS Executive

Chairman Cr Sue Whelan (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).

