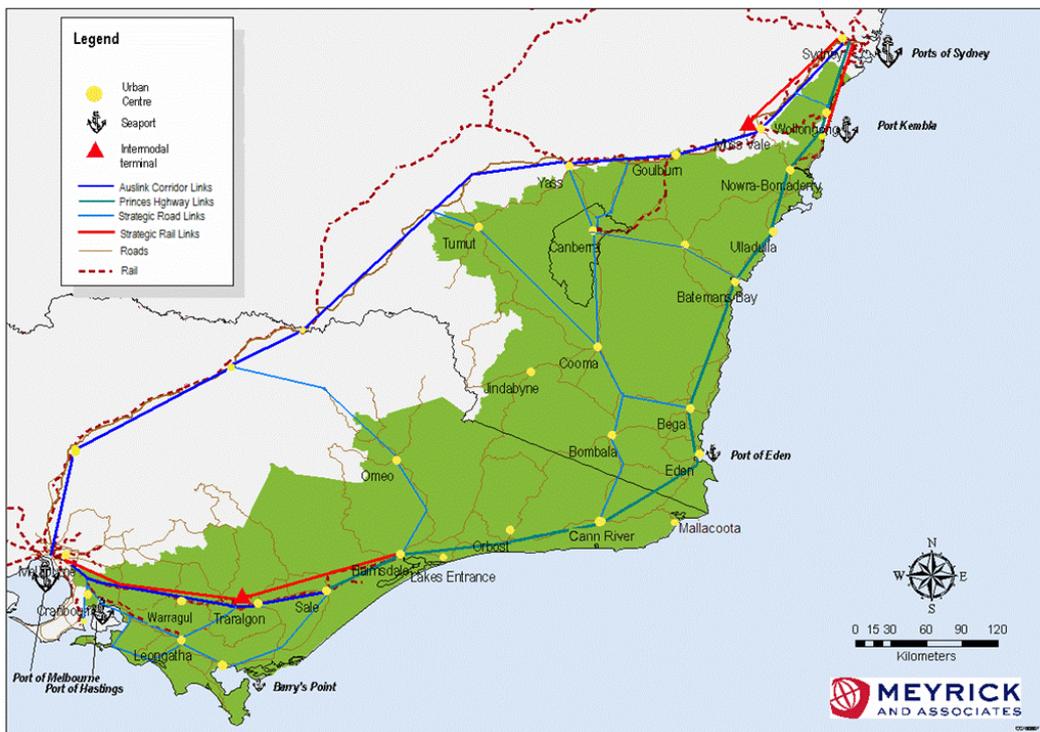


SEATS Strategic Network: A Preliminary Definition



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SEATS region encompasses a population of 1.5 million urban and rural constituents located in 18 local government areas, and the ACT, between Dandenong in the south and Wollongong in the north. The Great Dividing Range forms the region's spine, its forests and parks accounting for a population density of less than one per square kilometre throughout much of the region. Remoteness from goods and services is a concern throughout parts of this diverse region, exacerbated by the needs of an ageing population. Meeting the health and education needs of all constituents requires well connected and robust land transport services and infrastructure.

Employment in the region is supported by the main industry groupings of construction and utilities; retail, accommodation and transport; and education, health and services. Robust passenger and freight services and infrastructure are necessary to underpin these economic drivers of the region. Agriculture, forestry and mining industries such as timber, dairy, grazing and horticulture also make an important contribution to the region and require freight transport networks to provide supply chain connectivity. The tourist industry centred on the region's recreational lakes, rivers, mountains and beaches, needs the support of excellent land transport infrastructure.

It is of central importance to future development in the region that infrastructure planning be carried out in an integrated way in order to bridge the gaps in the region's land transport network. Only integrated infrastructure planning, as opposed to numbers of local level infrastructure projects, will ensure the connectivity of the infrastructure network.

As a preliminary step in developing an integrated transport plan, SEATS identified the need to carry out a strategic network analysis. Such an analysis would provide the basis for developing a preliminary list of infrastructure improvement projects to support and enhance the network as a whole. The Strategic Network that has been developed is described in this paper. It is a set of routes, links and assets within the SEATS region; each one either owned or funded at local, state and federal level, and each deemed to be strategic for ensuring internal and external connectivity of both freight and passenger traffic, and for underpinning regional economic and social development.

The Strategic Network was collaboratively determined by SEATS members based on meeting at least three of the criteria below.

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 relatively 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 community.

The Strategic Network that was determined by this process represents a hierarchy of the region's infrastructure assets from the strategic network to regionally strategic routes. The Strategic Network is the infrastructure that the SEATS region relies on, but does not indicate its relative effectiveness.

The Strategic Network will provide a collective focus for SEATS' land transport infrastructure planning. It is designed to be used as a planning and funding tool by member local governments, regional groups, state governments, the private sector and the Federal Government. Its use is expected to encourage investment in SEATS because it will promote projects that go beyond the confines of singular local governments and provide benefits to the whole of the region, and indeed, to Victoria, NSW and ACT.

The following links comprise the SEATS Strategic Network.

SEATS STRATEGIC NETWORK

Links	Links
Princes Highway	South Gippsland Highway
Monaro Highway	Picton Road
Moss Vale-Sydney Rail	Main Road 92
Bomaderry-Sydney Rail	Port of Melbourne
Melbourne-Bairnsdale Rail	Port of Hastings
Strzelecki Highway	Port of Eden
Federal Highway	Port of Port Kembla
Barton Highway	Latrobe Intermodal Facility
Snowy Mountains Highway	Moss Vale Intermodal Facility
Illawara Highway	Dandenong Intermodal Facility
The Hume Freeway	Moss Vale-Port Kembla Rail
Kings Highway	

As well as defining the Strategic Network, SEATS considered and defined the key requirements to maintain and improve the network and to identify its gaps and needs. These are the sixteen initiatives that have been put forward to improve routes and infrastructure on the Strategic Network. (They are described in detail in sections 3.1 and 3.2.)

STRATEGIC NETWORK INITIATIVES

Recommendation	
South East Australian Transport Strategy	Develop a South East Australian Transport Strategy
Road Related Projects	
Recognition of the Princes Highway under AusLink and related projects	<p>A number of projects that have been put forward in previous studies need to be re-prioritised given the strategic importance of the Princes Highway to the whole of South East Australia. These projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dual carriageway north of the Jervis Bay ▪ Ensure B-Double access between Nowra and Bega ▪ Elimination of major constraint points particularly the Pambula River floodplain and other points at Wandandian, Milton- Ulladulla, Batemans Bay and Narooma ▪ Upgrades between the Victorian border and Jervis Bay. ▪ Dual highway from Traralgon to Sale and Bairnsdale ▪ East Traralgon Bypass ▪ Heavy vehicle bypasses of Bairnsdale, Sale and Bega ▪ Upgrades between Bairnsdale and the NSW border
Kings Highway	A development strategy for the Kings Highway is now required as well as increased ongoing funding allocations for upgrade works.
Monaro Highway improvements in NSW and Victoria	Ensuring that the full link of the Monaro provides adequate capacity now and into the future requires a coordinated approach between all levels of Government. This work required includes key upgrades to the link north of the NSW border through to Lanyon Drive as well as shoulder sealing, improvement to some curved alignments and overtaking opportunities in the section between Cann River and the Victorian border.
Picton Road / MR95 Upgrade	Follow RTA's direction of additional overtaking lanes and, in the longer term, an upgrade to two lanes in each direction by developing an implementation strategy.
Main Road 92	Beyond Nerriga a route corridor needs to be identified and encapsulated in regional and local planning instruments as soon as possible
Linking Tumut to the Hume	Assessment of whether the current standard of the route is acceptable. A future development strategy is recommended

Recommendation	
Bass Highway Upgrades	It is a high priority project of SEATS to ensure that the improvements within the VicRoads Bass Highway Strategy document are progressed as soon as possible.
Great Alpine Road and Snowy Mountain upgrades	Continued support for ongoing improvements to the Great Alpine Road and the Snowy Mountains Highway to improve safety and efficiency is recommended.
Strzelecki Highway upgrades	The VicRoads <i>Strzelecki Highway Management Study</i> provides a framework for development of this route, which should be adhered to and updated accordingly.
South Gippsland Highway Improvements	<p>Support the improvement schedule within the the VicRoads South Gippsland Highway Strategy document are progressed as soon as possible.</p> <p>Develop the Cranbourne bypass of South Gippsland Highway in a timely manner</p> <p>Support the VicRoads strategy to develop a high standard arterial connection between the South Gippsland Highway and the Princes Freeway.</p>
Port and Intermodal Related Projects	
Port Kembla and associated road and rail infrastructure	It is recommended that a corridor study be undertaken for road and rail access into Port Kembla.
Intermodal Development	Working at all levels of Government to ensure sustainable and appropriate intermodal development is recommended.
Port of Hastings and associated road and rail infrastructure	The largest need — or real infrastructure gap — in the region is appropriate road and rail links to this port through Dandenong and the broader Gippsland region.
Rail Related Projects	
Dandenong Triplification on the Melbourne-Bairnsdale Line	The triplification of the Dandenong rail line is highlighted in Meeting Our Transport Challenges and is commended by SEATS. It is the hope of the SEATS region that this project will improve passenger and or freight access into the urban Melbourne area. However with such a project, significant disruption to services could occur and this would be likely to impact upon current passenger and freight rail service levels.
Sydney to Bomaderry Rail Supply	The current and future capacity of the network to undertake this passenger task needs to be investigated to determine the level of upgrade and maintenance required.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an overview of land transport needs in the South East Australian region. The aim of this study is to provide a strategic way forward for the whole of the South East Australian transport network. Therefore, the recommendations and priorities contained in this study are directed to a strategic rather than local level.

The terms of reference for this study require an assessment of initiatives on the SEATS land transport network whose completion will improve economic and social outcomes for the whole region. The boundaries for assessment are therefore not limited to the borders of the SEATS region but also include important linkages to ports, population and economic activity centres on which the population of SEATS relies. In assessing need, this study has considered all modes of land transport, with a particular focus on the road and rail network. Whilst many of the priorities put forward in this study can be considered traditional infrastructure projects — such as road construction, rail extensions and the like — non-infrastructure initiatives, which could provide benefits to the region as a whole, are also included.

1.1 The SEATS region

FIGURE 1 SEATS REGION

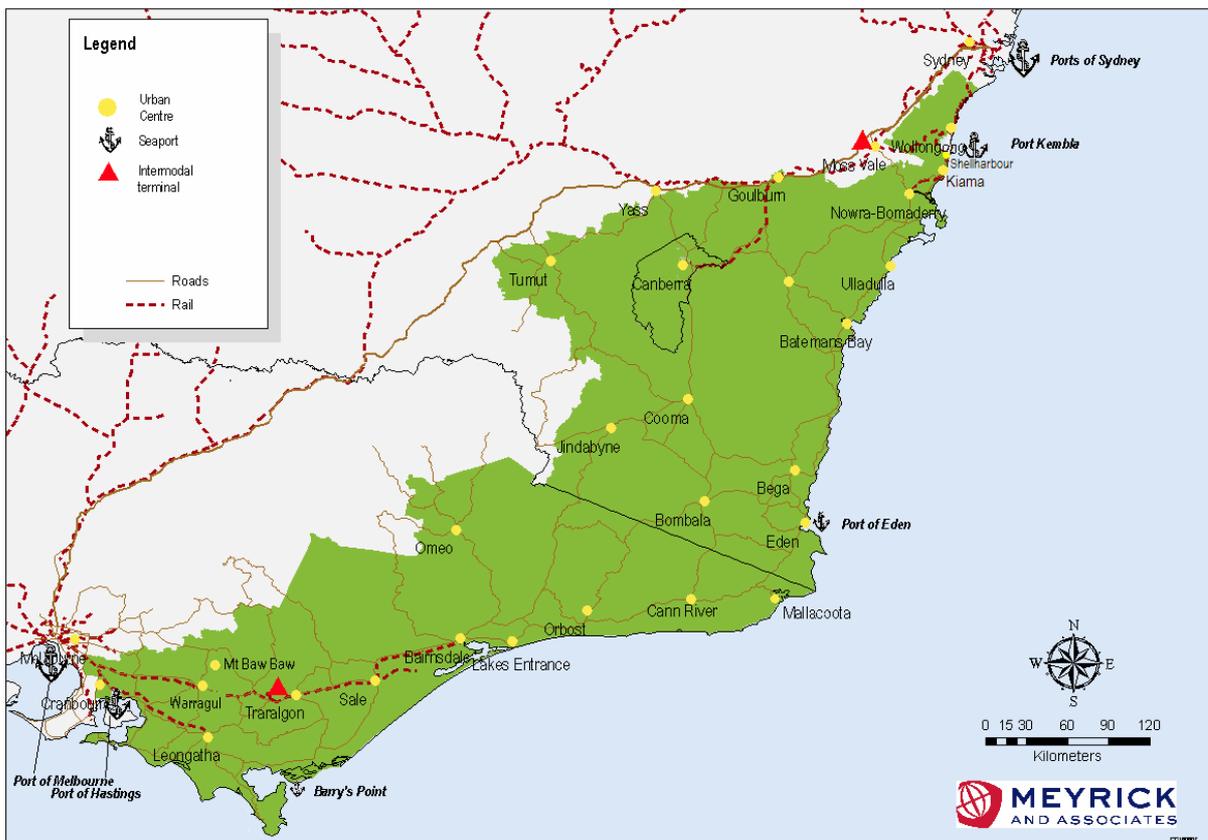
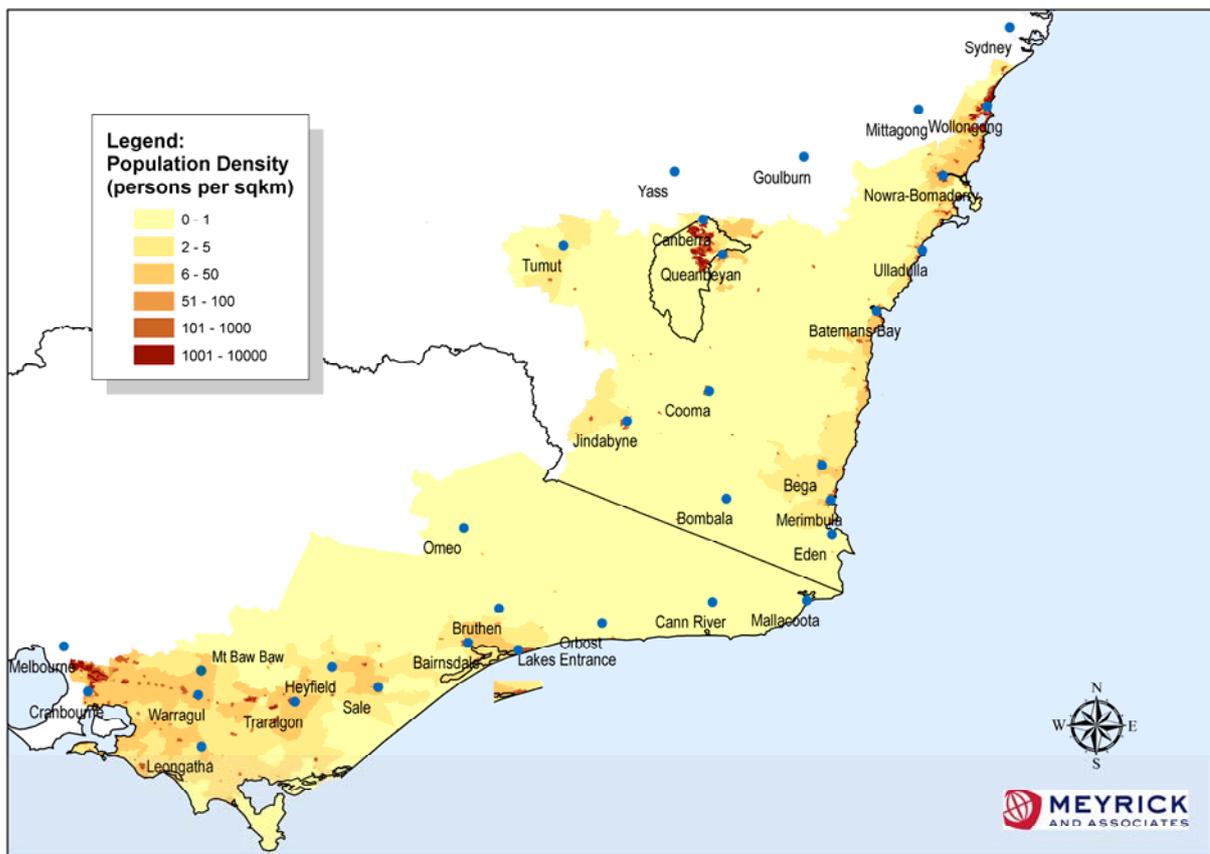


Figure 1 provides an overview of the SEATS region including strategic land transport infrastructure within or surrounding the region. In essence, the region stretches from Wollongong to Dandenong with its western border defined by the Hume Highway. The SEATS region encompasses 18 local government areas and the Australian Capital Territory. For a full list of SEATS members refer to Appendix A.

Population characteristics

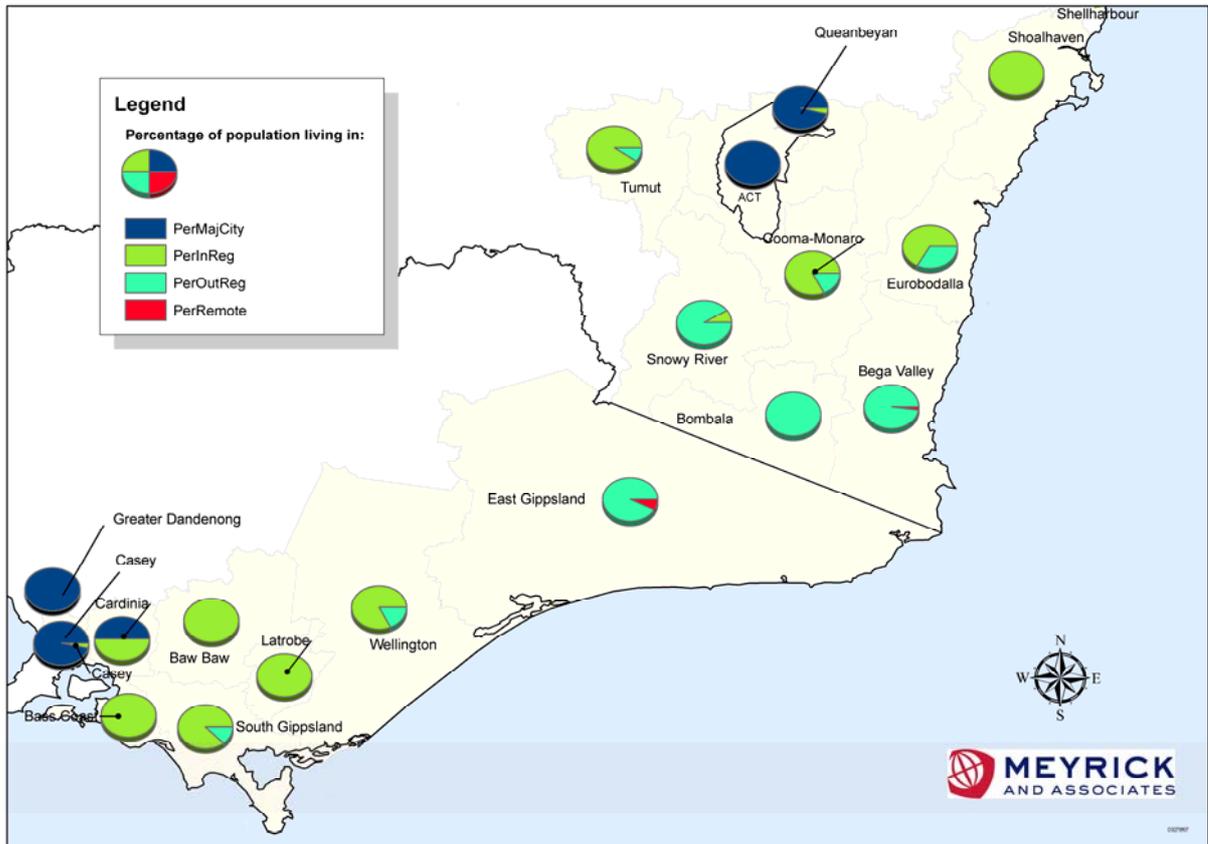
FIGURE 2 POPULATION OF SEATS



As displayed in Figure 2 the population of the SEATS region is distributed sparsely across the region. The Princes Highway forms the primary transportation spine through the region, linking the high density population centres of Melbourne and Sydney. Secondary transportation routes link the Canberra–Queanbeyan population centre. Clustered along the primary spine are areas of higher population density in Gippsland and the far south east coast of NSW. Other population centres form around Cooma, Tumut and Jindabyne in the Snowy Mountains and the coastal belt of South Gippsland. The total population of the SEATS region recorded in the 2007 census is in the order of 1.5 million.

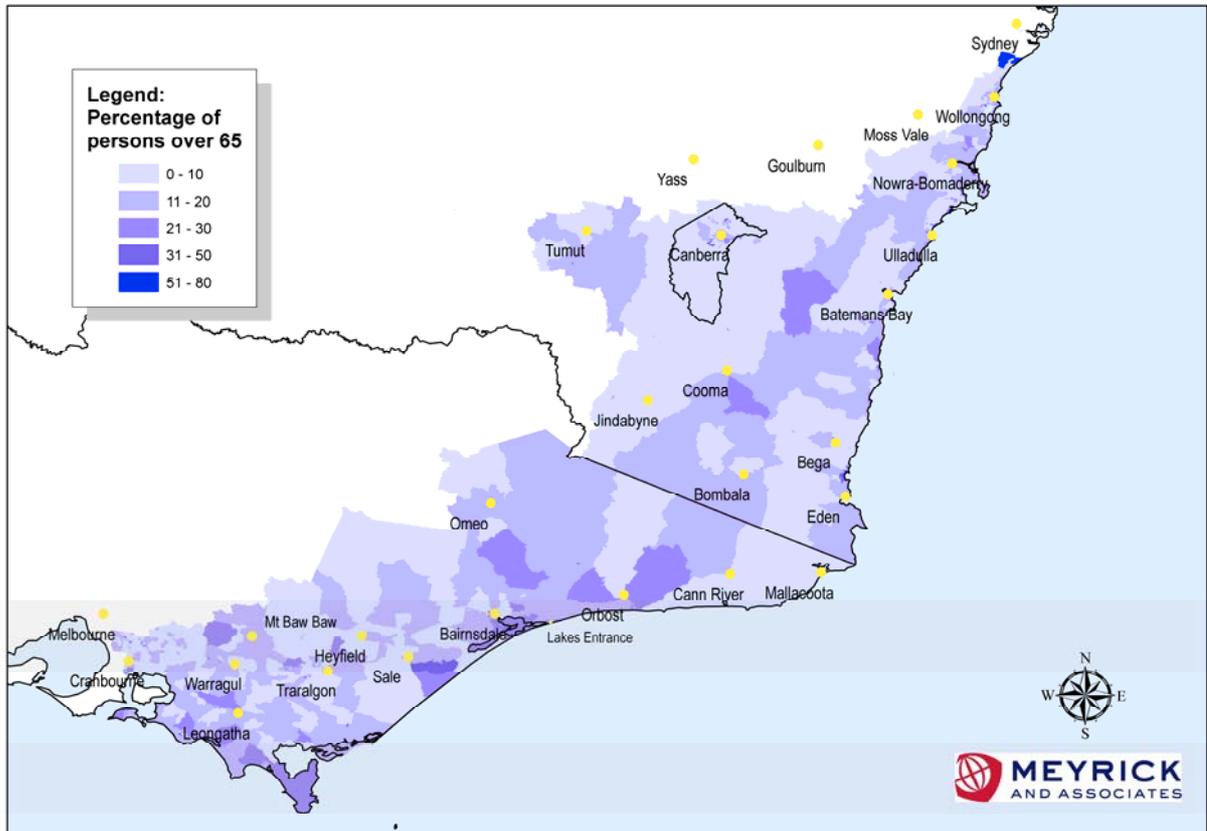
A very important element of any transport network is its capacity to provide effective and efficient personal travel. The spread of population thinly into remote parts of the region has consequences for transport accessibility and the relative ability of all SEATS residents to have access to an appropriate level of service from the transport infrastructure and services. It is crucial that public transport systems and the regulatory frameworks that underpin them work to the advantage of all residents throughout the SEATS transport network.

FIGURE 3 RELATIVE REMOTENESS WITHIN SEATS REGION



Clearly from Figure 2 and Figure 3, such a spread of population into remote regions means that there is an overwhelming reliance on land transport to move freight and passengers between relatively remote locations. This is particularly the case for the East Gippsland, Bega, Bombala and Snowy River Local Government Areas. Remoteness also imposes significant transportation requirements in the Tumut, Cooma-Monaro, Eurobodalla, Wellington and South Gippsland Shires.

FIGURE 4 PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION OVER 65 IN THE SEATS REGION



Coupled with the impact of the remoteness of some parts of the SEATS region, transport accessibility issues are exacerbated by the demographics of the region, with a relatively high percentage of persons over the age of 65 (as outlined in Figure 4). This has implications also for the makeup of employment and economic activity in the region.

1.2 Economic drivers of the SEATS region

FIGURE 5 EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY TYPE IN THE SEATS REGION

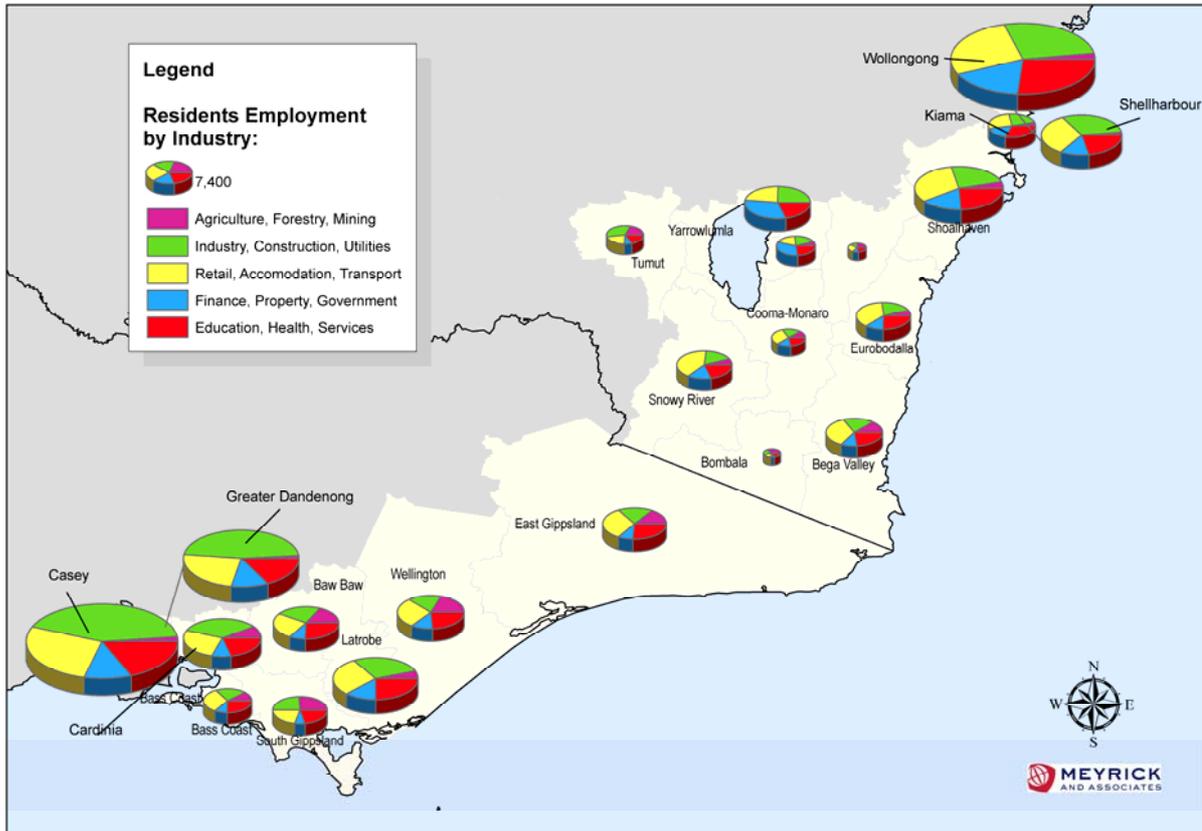
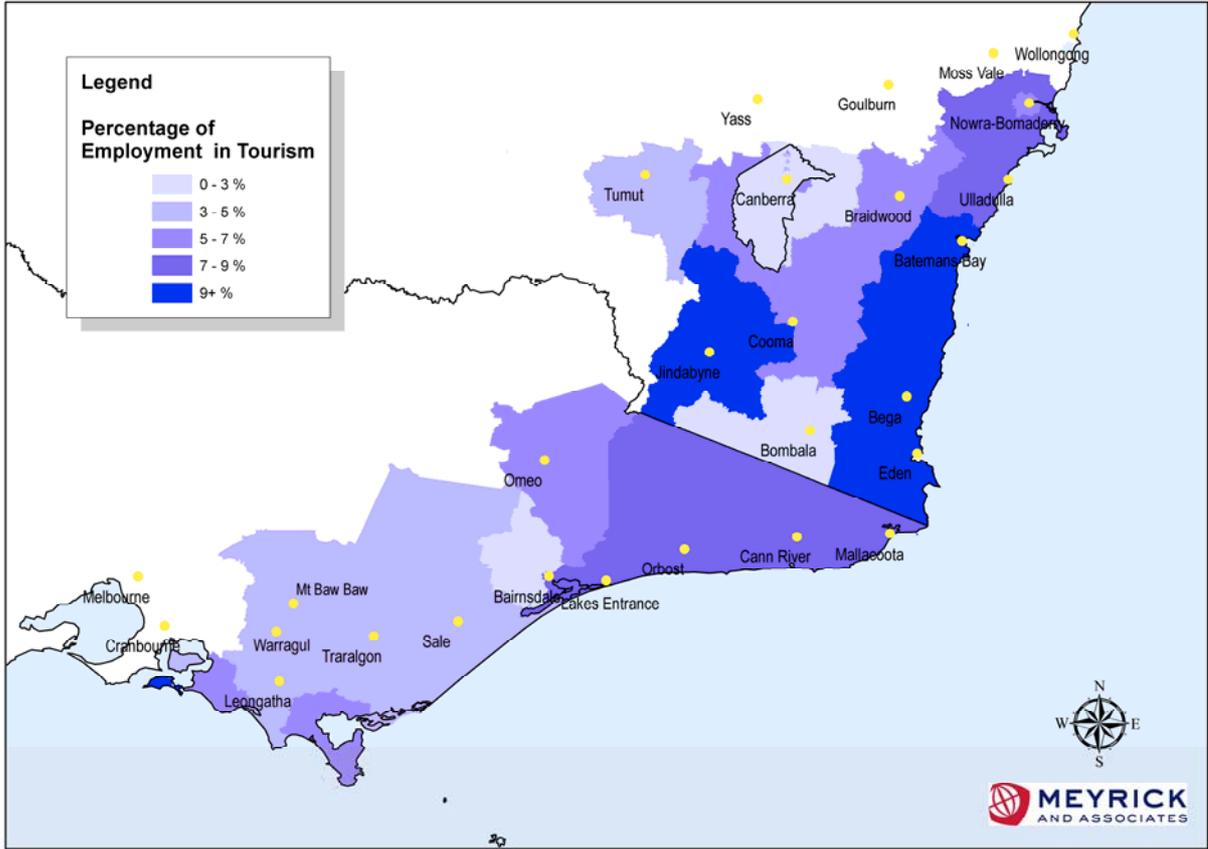


Figure 5 indicates the proportion of residents employed by major industry type in each SEATS region. The three main industry groups are industry construction and utilities; retail, accommodation and transport; and education, health and services. Whilst the prevalence of industry, construction and utilities is centred around the south-west area of the study region, composition of employment remains relatively stable across the rest of the region. It can be ascertained from Figure 5 that the services' sector represents a strong element of economic activity and transport needs in the region. This has implications for both passenger and freight demand. Tourism, particularly along the coastal areas of the SEATS region, is a key industry (as indicated by Figure 6) and the transport needs of tourist moving into and out of the region is a high priority.

Figure 5 also indicates that the provision of education and health services is also crucial to the region, which has implications for land transport particularly passenger and private movements. What this figure does not indicate clearly is the strong freight transport demand derived from the agriculture, forestry and mining sectors, which also contribute significantly to the region's economic well-being. Industries such as timber, dairy, grazing and horticulture are key economic drivers of the region and have previously and will continue to shape the land transport network.

FIGURE 6 PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM



2. STRATEGIC NETWORK

2.1 What is a strategic network?

It is a set of routes, links and assets within the SEATS region; each one either owned or funded at local, state and federal level, and each deemed to be strategic for ensuring internal and external connectivity of both freight and passenger traffic, and for underpinning regional economic and social development.

In defining a Strategic Network the members of SEATS are highlighting the routes, links and assets that are worthy of collective and collaborative attention, planning and funding by local government, regional groups, state governments, the private sector and the Federal Government.

The Strategic Network defines a hierarchy of assets from the most strategic network to the regionally strategic routes. Its use is expected to encourage investment in SEATS because it will promote projects that go beyond the confines of singular local governments and provide benefits to the whole of the region and beyond.

2.2 Decision making criteria

To determine the Strategic Network for this study all relevant links and infrastructure were assessed against the following criteria:

Is the link or infrastructure:

- 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 relatively 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 land transport amenity of the SEATS community?**

These criteria are based both on the demographic and economic characteristics of the region and by an assessment of funding criteria. In order for an infrastructure or link to be considered for the strategic network it had to meet at least three of the criteria. The table below outlines the outcomes of this assessment.

Links	Criteria Score	Internal Connectivity	Intermodal transfer point	Market access	Industries Route	Accessibility	Support by parties	Transport amenity
Princes Highway	6	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bomaderry-Sydney Rail	5			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Melbourne-Bairnsdale Rail	5	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Monaro Highway	5	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Moss Vale-Sydney Rail	5			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Gippsland Highway	5	✓			✓	✓		✓
Dandenong Intermodal Facility	4		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Federal Highway	4				✓	✓	✓	✓
Illawara Highway	4				✓	✓	✓	✓
Kings Highway	4	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Latrobe Intermodal Facility	4		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Moss Vale Intermodal Facility	4		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Picton Road	4				✓	✓	✓	✓
Port of Hastings	4		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Port of Melbourne	4		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Port of Port Kembla	4		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Snowy Mountains Highway	4	✓			✓	✓		✓
Strzelecki Highway	4	✓			✓	✓		✓
Hume Freeway	3			✓	✓		✓	
Moss Vale-Port Kembla Rail	3			✓	✓		✓	
Port of Eden	3		✓	✓			✓	

3. INITIATIVES GOING FORWARD

In defining a strategic network, it is important to consider how to maintain and improve the network and to identify its gaps and needs.

A number of initiatives have been put forward that relate to routes and infrastructure on the strategic network and these have been prioritised accordingly.

Furthermore, gaps in the network as well as projects of regional significance have been considered against the decision making criteria in order to develop a listing of prioritised projects that have regional significance (yet do not pertain directly to the strategic network). These initiatives require the support of more than one local government area to come to realisation.

Table: 3.1 lists these initiatives which are discussed in sections 3.1 and 3.2. Some supporting ‘non-infrastructure’ initiatives are also discussed.

TABLE: 3.1 SEATS NETWORK INITIATIVES

Recommendation		Detail of initiative
South East Australian Transport Strategy	Develop a South East Australian Transport Strategy	Section 3.1
Road Related Projects		
Recognition of the Princes Highway under AusLink and related projects	<p>A number of projects that have been put forward in previous studies need to be re-prioritised given the strategic importance of the Princes Highway to the whole of South East Australia. These projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dual carriageway north of the Jervis Bay ▪ Ensure B-Double access between Nowra and Bega ▪ Elimination of major constraint points particularly the Pambula River floodplain and other points at Wandandian, Milton- Ulladulla, Batemans Bay and Narooma ▪ Upgrades between the Victorian border and Jervis Bay. ▪ Dual highway from Traralgon to Sale and Bairnsdale ▪ East Traralgon Bypass ▪ Heavy vehicle bypasses of Bairnsdale, Sale and Bega ▪ Upgrades between Bairnsdale and the NSW border 	Section 3.2.1
Kings Highway	A development strategy for the Kings Highway is now required as well as increased ongoing allocation to fund upgrade works.	Section 3.2.2

	Recommendation	Detail of initiative
Monaro Highway improvements in NSW and Victoria	Ensuring that the full link of the Monaro provides adequate capacity now and into the future requires a coordinated approach between all levels of Government. This work required includes key upgrades to the link north of the NSW border through to Lanyon Drive as well as shoulder sealing, improvement to some curved alignments and overtaking opportunities in the section between Cann River and the Victorian border.	Section 3.2.3
Picton Road / MR95 Upgrade	Follow RTA's direction of additional overtaking lanes and, in the longer term, an upgrade to two lanes in each direction by developing an implementation strategy	Section 3.2.4
Main Road 92	Beyond Nerriga a route corridor needs to be identified and encapsulated in regional and local planning instruments as soon as possible	Section 3.2.5
Linking Tumut to the Hume	Assessment of whether the current standard of the route is acceptable. A future development strategy is recommended	Section 3.2.6
Bass Highway Upgrades	It is a high priority project of SEATS to ensure that the improvements within the VicRoads Bass Highway Strategy document are progressed as soon as possible.	Section 3.2.7
Great Alpine Road and Snowy Mountain upgrades	Continued support for ongoing improvements to the Great Alpine Road and the Snowy Mountains Highway to improve safety and efficiency is recommended.	Section 3.2.8
Strzelecki Highway upgrades	The VicRoads <i>Strzelecki Highway Management Study</i> provides a framework for development of this route, which should be adhered to and updated accordingly.	Section 3.2.9
South Gippsland Highway Improvements	<p>Support the improvement schedule within the the VicRoads South Gippsland Highway Strategy document are progressed as soon as possible.</p> <p>Develop the Cranbourne bypass of South Gippsland Highway in a timely manner</p> <p>Support the VicRoads strategy to develop a high standard arterial connection between the South Gippsland Highway and the Princes Freeway.</p>	Section 3.2.10

Recommendation		Detail of initiative
Port and Intermodal Related Projects		
Port Kembla and associated road and rail infrastructure	It is recommended that a corridor study be undertaken for road and rail access into Port Kembla.	Section 3.2.11
Intermodal Development	Working at all levels of Government to ensure sustainable and appropriate intermodal development is recommended.	Section 3.2.12
Port of Hastings and associated road and rail infrastructure	The largest need — or real infrastructure gap — in the region is appropriate road and rail links to this port through Dandenong and the broader Gippsland region.	Section 3.2.13
Rail Related Projects		
Dandenong Triplification on the Melbourne-Bairnsdale Line	The triplification of the Dandenong rail line is highlighted in Meeting Our Transport Challenges and is commended by SEATS. It is the hope of the SEATS region that this project will improve passenger and or freight access into the urban Melbourne area. However with such a project, significant disruption to services could occur and this would be likely to impact upon current passenger and freight rail service levels.	Section 3.2.14
Sydney to Bomaderry Rail Supply	The current and future capacity of the network to undertake this passenger task needs to be investigated to determine the level of upgrade and maintenance required.	Section 3.2.15

3.1 South East Australia Transport Strategy

The Strategic Network represents a first cut at defining the required network for internal and external connectivity throughout the SEATS region. The projects outlined below talk to the immediate enhancements required on this network. They have been identified through review of previous studies and selective consultation.

Whilst a significant number of previous studies have focused either on one element of the strategic network, or one geographic region, there remains a significant knowledge gap which, if filled, would assist in confirming priorities into the future. Furthermore, cross government border issues, both at a local government and state level will not be rectified without such a plan.

In light of this preliminary definition paper, there is a need for a broader study to development and update the existing South East Transport Strategy completed over 20 years ago. Elements of this study would include confirmation and adjustment to the preliminary strategic network defined in this paper, through interviews with shippers, transport providers and agencies. This strategy would also provide a definitive prioritisation of those projects that would boost the network (many introduced below) and would focus on the missing links that add maximum value to the region as a whole, in particular:

- Corridor planning for access to Port Kembla, Port of Hastings, Sydney Port and along Main Road 92 beyond Nerriga
- Upgrades to the Princes Highway
- Improvements to the Monaro Highway
- Development of the connection at Lanyon Drive
- Development of Kings Highway
- Works on Picton Road, Clyde Mountain, Victoria and Dignams Creek crossings
- Intermodal area improvements – particularly in Morwell.
- Demand and supply investigations of the Maldon Dumbarton, Moss Vale and Sutherland to Hurstville rail lines.
- Demand and supply investigations of the airports servicing the SEATS region

3.2 Initiatives relating to the Strategic Network

3.2.1 Recognition of the Princes Highway under AusLink and related projects

The Princes Highway forms the most vital link to business, regional development and the communities that live along it in the SEATS region. Road transport is virtually the only means of transporting goods (both import and export) and people from Nowra in New South Wales to Bairnsdale in Victoria. It is also the most important passenger transport link in the region particularly South of Nowra.

Although the corridor represents an area of significant economic importance to Australia, the current AusLink National Network does not recognise the Highway from Wollongong to Sale.

The maintenance and improvement of the Princes Highway between Melbourne and Sydney is an important issue and under current arrangements its funding is split between Federal and state responsibilities. The volumes of traffic and strategic importance of the link should allow it to be recognised fully on the National Network.

Indeed, the missing link of the Princes Highway rates well when assessed against the three criteria used by the Australian Government in considering proposals for the inclusion of links in the national network:

- Inter-regional freight volumes and passenger flows
- The population and economic significance of centres proposed to be linked
- The strategic trading importance of individual links and export gateways.

In response to this there are a number of projects that have been put forward in previous studies; these need to be re-prioritised given the strategic importance of the Princes Highway to the whole of South East Australia. These projects and priorities include:

- A focus on the route between Nowra and Wollongong through dual carriageway development north of the Jervis Bay
- Elimination of major constraint points particularly the Pambula River floodplain and other points at Wandandian, Milton- Ulladulla, Batemans Bay and Narooma
- Ensure B-Double access between Nowra and Bega
- Improving crossings of Brogo River, Victoria Creek and Dignams Creek
- Upgrades between the Victorian border and Jervis Bay.
- Dual highway from Traralgon to Sale and Bairnsdale
- East Traralgon Bypass
- Heavy vehicle bypasses of Bairnsdale, Sale and Bega
- Upgrades between Bairnsdale and the NSW border

3.2.2 Kings Highway

An independent route performance audit of the Kings Highway (Main Road 51) between Queanbeyan and Bateman's Bay was conducted in 2005. This study found that the 134 km corridor provided a critical west east transport link for commuter, tourist, business and general traffic that travel between the ACT and coastal townships situated along the far south coast of NSW. It also found significant lengths of the route suffered from poor overtaking opportunities and relatively high accident statistics.

A development strategy for the Kings Highway is now required as well as increased ongoing allocation to fund upgrade works.

3.2.3 Monaro Highway improvements in NSW and Victoria

The Monaro Highway connects between Yass in NSW and Cann River in Victoria. Currently, the agricultural and timber industry utilise the Highway to move fruit and vegetables to Sydney and Canberra and timber/chips for export at Eden. The Highway supports a number of other industries in its vicinity including dairying, beef cattle, timber and tourism. It also connects to the Princes Highway, the Snowy Mountains Highway (providing access to the NSW Alpine Resorts and Kosciusko National Parks), the Federal Highway), providing access to the Hume Highway and Sydney, Imlay Road, providing access to the port of Eden and Bonang Road, providing alternative access from Orbst to Bombala (via Delegate). As well as an important B-Double route, the Highway attracts a growing number of passenger and tourist vehicles wishing to access east Gippsland or Southern NSW/Canberra markets.

Ensuring that the full link of the Monaro provides adequate capacity now and into the future requires a coordinated approach between all levels of Government. This work required includes key upgrades to the link north of the NSW border through to Lanyon Drive as well as shoulder sealing, improvement to some curved alignments and overtaking opportunities in the section between Cann River and the Victorian border.

3.2.4 Picton Road /MR95 improvements and prioritisation

The Picton Road currently carries approximately 14,000 vehicles a day of which, a relatively large proportion, 20%, are heavy vehicles. This route is the preferred freight connection between the Illawarra / Port Kembla and Sydney / HW2 Hume Hwy / M7 Sydney Orbital. This preference is likely to be strengthened with the ongoing development of Port Kembla.

The route currently is constrained by limited overtaking opportunities and a high level and mix of heavy vehicles, which contributes to a high incidence of crashes. Therefore, the traffic mix on MR95 needs to be monitored and managed given the high percentage of freight and increasing residential development.

While not appearing on the AusLink National Network, there were provisions in the 2004 AusLink White Paper for MR95 to be considered as a “transport link of regional significance” and thus allowing the route to cater for high mass limits or concessional mass limits.

RTA’s direction for upgrading the link includes additional overtaking lanes and, in the longer term, an upgrade to two lanes in each direction by developing an implementation strategy.

3.2.5 Main Road 92 link identification and planning

The work to construct and develop Main Road 92 from Nowra to Nerriga should be completed in 2009, yet beyond Nerriga a route corridor needs to be identified and encapsulated in regional and local planning instruments as soon as possible. This link may be to the west through Tarago and / or Bungendore into Queanbeyan and Canberra with a shorter future link to the Hume Highway from Tarago through Collector and on to Gunning.

3.2.6 Linking Tumut to the Hume – Gocup Road

The MR279 Gocup Road is 33.5 kilometres in length and links the Hume Highway at Gundagai to Tumut. Currently, approximately 230,000 tonnes of wood product is trucked along this route from the Hume Highway to Visy, Weyerhaeuser and other timber mills in and around Tumut. There is a further freight task of some 240,000 tonnes per annum travelling back up the Gocup Road to Sydney.

The route currently carries an estimated 234 heavy vehicles per day. With major forestry-based re-developments underway, the transport task is set to increase to over 400 heavy vehicles per weekday. Of the forestry-based freight, the outbound task is expected to increase to around 655,000 tonnes per annum by 2009/2010.

The current and future freight task discussed above requires an assessment of whether the current standard of the route is acceptable. A future development strategy is recommended.

3.2.7 Bass Highway upgrades

The Bass Highway (M420) stretches from the South Gippsland Highway (A440) near Lang Lang, heading south to the coast servicing Grantville, Bass and Anderson townships. Approximately halfway between San Remo and Kilcunda, the Highway veers east and becomes the B460 servicing Kilcunda, Dalyston, Wonthaggi and Inverloch. Important industries served by the highway include tourism, dairying and beef production.

VicRoads data (2003) indicates Bass Highway traffic volumes at 10,000 vpd between Lang Lang and Grantville (comprising 9.5% commercial), 3,000 vpd between Inverloch and Leongatha (6% commercial) and peaks at around 15,000 vpd at Christmas, Easter and the motorcycle Grand Prix.

Traffic volumes are currently growing by 4–5% per annum and future freight movements are forecast to increase as concrete sand is extracted at Lang Lang and Grantville for Melbourne’s concrete industry. Traffic volumes on the Phillip Island Tourist Road are expected to grow by 4% reaching 10,000 by 2013.

It is a high priority project of SEATS to ensure that the improvements within the VicRoads Strategy document are progressed as soon as possible.

3.2.8 Great Alpine Road and Snowy Mountains Highway upgrades

The Great Alpine Road and Snowy Mountains Highway provide the strategic links across the SEATS region between the Hume and the Princes Highway.

The Great Alpine Road originates in Bairnsdale and serves as the principal access route to a number of communities and towns including Clifton Creek, Wiseleigh, Bruthen, Tambo Crossing and Swifts Creek. The road has high level scenic appeal through the alpine sections and the alpine approaches in NE Victoria. The road is actively promoted in East Gippsland as an attractive alternative route to the Mt Hotham Ski Fields. Further support by government for road improvements, particularly for the section between Bruthen and Omeo, will result in further year round tourism related usage.

Freight on the road includes:

- Softwood logs to Myrtleford and Wangaratta
- Hardwood logs from between Benambra and Ensay to mills at Swifts Creek, Bruthen, Bairnsdale and Heyfield, or to storage yards in Bairnsdale before being transported to other processing mills in the Latrobe Valley or Melbourne
- Livestock between East Gippsland and North Victoria between November and April
- Other freight movements related to primary production along the route
- General supplies to towns
- Energy (LPG) deliveries to the Alpine resorts.

In 2004, VicRoads estimated traffic volumes on the Great Alpine Road between Bairnsdale and Bruthen at 2500 vpd, of which approximately 16% were commercial vehicles. The VPD was expected to rise at a rate of 1.5% per annum.

The Snowy Mountains Highway originates 6km north of Bega and traverses through Cooma and Tumut prior to linking with the Hume south west of Gundagai. The route traverses the Kosciuszko National Park, Snowy Mountains and the Monaro Plains.

Continued support for ongoing improvements to the Great Alpine Road and the Snowy Mountains Highway to improve safety and efficiency is recommended.

3.2.9 Strzelecki Highway

The Strzelecki Highway stretches from Leongatha in the south to Morwell in the north. At Morwell it intersects with the Princes Highway (M1) and at Leongatha it intersects with the South Gippsland Highway (B440) and continues on as the Bass Highway (A420/B460). It serves as the main link between the Latrobe Valley region and Phillip Island, Wilsons Promontory and the Bass Coast.

The highway services a range of industries including timber logging and milling, quarrying, dairy, beef and potato farming agriculture and tourism. The VicRoads *Strzelecki Highway Management Study* provides a framework for development of this route, which should be adhered to and updated accordingly.

3.2.10 South Gippsland Highway

The South Gippsland Highway extends for a distance of 258 kilometres from Dandenong (Berwick) to Sale. It provides access between Melbourne and Cranbourne, the east coast of Westernport Bay, Phillip Island, the Bass Coast (via Bass Highway) and the agricultural regions of South Gippsland. It also provides access to Korumburra, Leongatha, Foster, Yarram, Sale and Victoria's major oil and gas platforms, which are serviced from Longford and the port facility located at Barry Beach.

In terms of tourism, the South Gippsland Highway provides connections to Phillip Island, Wilsons Promontory and Tarra Bulga National Park. In the late 1990s the VicRoads Corridor Strategy for the South Gippsland Highway recorded the following freight movements.

- 200,000 tonnes of timber is transported annually along the short section of the highway between Yarram and the Hyland Highway to the mill in Yarram and the Australian Paper Mill at Maryvale.
- 40-90,000 tonnes of timber is moved annually along other sections of the highway.
- Dairy produce, moved to factories in Leongatha and then finished dairy product for export from Melbourne, constitute 72,000 truck movements per annum.
- Livestock is transported to the regional market at Koonwarra.
- Materials and product are freighted to and from light engineering factories in Korumburra and Leongatha.
- Vegetables, particularly potatoes, are transported from farms near Koo Wee Rup and Lang Lang.
- Sand extraction occurs near Lang Lang and Grantville to service the Melbourne market. Over the next five years, it is expected that this movement will increase to one million tonnes annually as resources in outer Melbourne are depleted.
- Meat is carried for export from an abattoir near Lance Creek.
- Fish is freighted from fleets at Port Welshpool and Port Albert.
- Oil and gas industry requirements are freighted to and from Barry Beach and the terminal at Longford.

The same document recorded traffic volumes on the Highway measured over five years ago vary from 40,000 vpd north of Cranbourne, 4,500 vpd between Korumburra and Leongatha and 600 vpd between Woodside and Longford. Commercial vehicles were estimated at approximately 14% of all traffic. In this document and other related strategies Vicroads has detailed a forward work program for the development of the route. SEATS supports this process.

Cranbourne Bypass

The City of Casey is actively promoting traffic travelling on the South Gippsland Highway to bypass Cranbourne High Street. However, a solution in the form of a bypass is required to effectively deal with the issues of growth in urban density, increased traffic signals affecting traffic flow, and increased heavy vehicle traffic. It is recommended that the Cranbourne bypass of South Gippsland Highway be developed without delay.

Link between Five Ways and the Princes Freeway

VicRoads have a public strategy to develop a high standard arterial connection between the South Gippsland Highway at Five Ways through to the Princes Freeway at Berwick. The up-graded link would allow traffic from the South Gippsland Region, travelling in to Melbourne to avoid travelling through Cranbourne. This project would effectively support the Cranbourne bypass.

3.2.11 Port Kembla and associated road and rail infrastructure

Adequate planning and funding should be given to improve the ability of rail transport to and from Port Kembla from various parts of New South Wales. This could see linkages between Port Kembla and western New South Wales (eg Parkes). Such planning would ensure the longer term viability of Port Kembla and provide relief on the already overburdened road transport network in the Sydney urban area.

It is recommended that a corridor study be undertaken for road and rail access into Port Kembla. This would provide a complement to the work already undertaken by the port on freight accessibility and the current modelling of traffic flows in and round the Port.

3.2.12 Intermodal Developments / Inland ports in the SEATS region

Efficient and effective freight intermodal points will augment a road rail network and are likely to reduce external costs of transport. There are a number of operational and feasible sites in the SEATS region at, Latrobe, Bairnsdale, Dandenong, and Moss Vale. Outside of the region, the Goulburn intermodal facility is also likely to have a direct interaction with the SEATS strategic transport network. Working at all levels of government to ensure sustainable and appropriate intermodal development is recommended.

3.2.13 Port of Hastings and associated road and rail infrastructure

The Victorian Government has earmarked the Port of Hastings as the State's second container port. With appropriate road and rail access, the development of the Port of Hastings provides a strategic opportunity for the SEATS region in improving its export competitiveness.

Determination of the future road and rail routes servicing the Port of Hastings is currently being investigated by the Port of Hastings Corporation and the Victorian Department of Infrastructure. There has been considerable community concern regarding some of the options put forward as part of this investigation and the City of Casey has stated its preference for road/rail links to be planned along the Western Port Highway corridor rather than through the rural areas of the municipality.

We urge that the appropriate planning and consideration is given to the needs of the SEATS region in developing the final road and rail links. The definition of the Strategic Network of SEATS indicates that the largest need — or real infrastructure gap — in the region is appropriate road and rail links to this port through Dandenong and the broader Gippsland region. Ensuring that the SEATS region is not effectively locked out of this port as a result of the current broad gauge constraint is a significant consideration going forward.

3.2.14 Dandenong Triplification on the Melbourne – Bairnsdale rail line

A broad gauge (5 foot 3 inch or 1.6 metre) line runs from Melbourne to Bairnsdale (through Dandenong and is used for both passenger and freight trains. The maintenance and upkeep of the line is the responsibility of V/Line Pty Ltd. V/Line operates a passenger rail service between Melbourne and Bairnsdale with a Velocity service between Traralgon and Melbourne. The upgrading of the broad gauge line to service the Velocity trains also assists freight trains insofar as the infrastructure supports heavier axle loadings and speeds for freight trains.

Intermodal freight terminals are located at Bairnsdale and Morwell, with a smaller facility at Sale. The only rail freight currently handled by rail is export logs from Bairnsdale and Morwell to Geelong and paper from the Maryvale Mill (Morwell) to Melbourne for export and interstate.

The triplification of the Dandenong rail line is highlighted in Meeting Our Transport Challenges and is commended by SEATS. It is the hope of the SEATS region that this project will improve passenger and or freight access into the urban Melbourne area. However with such a project, significant disruption to services could occur and this would be likely to impact upon current passenger and freight rail service levels.

3.2.15 Sydney – Bombaderry Rail

The NSW Government has announced its intention to invest \$15bn in the urban rail network to reduce congestion; a proportion of this is to be invested on the Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra line. Any increase in rail commuting to Sydney downstream of this investment, particularly from Nowra and Wollongong, will ease pressure on the Princes Highway and the Sutherland area road network in particular.

The current and future capacity of the network to undertake this passenger task needs to be investigated to determine the level of upgrade and maintenance required. This investigation will need to consider the relevant NSW Department of Planning freight study and the limitations to expansion of commuter travel as a result of the single lane track south of Dapto and speed restraints at Thirroul and Waterfall.

3.3 Pillars to support initiatives

3.3.1 Recognition of the role of SEATS

The SEATS organisation provides leadership at the regional level with respect to transport network planning. It has played an important role over the past 20 years in integrated transport planning that bridges local government and state and territory boundaries. Research and planning undertaken by SEATS over the period has contributed to State and Federal road transport initiatives such as AusLink and State Transport Plans. Importantly, organisations such as SEATS provide a forum for shared learning and strategic planning that transcends individual interests for the improvements of regional connections.

Groups such as SEATS should be supported under AusLink to develop regional priorities.

3.3.2 Maintain and expand Strategic Regional Funding

This program is an important part of addressing inter-regional needs and driving regional economic development. This competitive grant program allows major capital projects to be undertaken that would normally be deferred through lack of Local Government funds.

3.3.3 Continue R2R funding

The Roads to Recovery (R2R) program should be continued as a permanent part of Australian government funding directly to local government to address their own local strategic priorities. The provision of a 'Direct to Local Government' funding program for major maintenance is essential to retain the asset in its most effective form.

3.3.4 Extending the scope of funding programs

SEATS believes that the Australian Government should allow funding from existing programs to be utilised for project planning and design addressing environmental and engineering issues. On most of the network a policy of continuous improvement should be scheduled in such a way that projects can be delivered in a reasonable timeframe and not postponed due to any inadequacy in ensuring that proper environmental standards are undertaken and pursued.

3.3.5 The local road and bridge network

As part of the South East Australian Transport Strategy the local road and bridge network across the SEATS region should be assessed using a consistent framework to determine priorities, designs and specifications for a region-wide approach to bridge replacements on key freight connectors. It was a recommendation of the Gippsland Transport Study that this assessment involve input from the shippers of freight which utilise the local government road and bridge network.

3.3.6 Timber Industry Advisory Committee

The establishment of a joint industry advisory committee to resolve issues affecting the safe transportation of timber products within NSW and between NSW and Victoria would provide significant benefits to the community. This body could also be requested to determine a workable policy to enable the timber industry to adequately recompense local government authorities for the use and maintenance of timber roads.

3.3.7 Victorian school bus system

SEATS together with the Gippsland Local Government Network seeks changes to rules to allow for greater transport opportunities for the community. This was a theme developed by Transport Strategy Officers from Bass Coast and East Gippsland Councils at September 2005 meeting of SEATS. This is a SEATS priority project and calls for a strategic study of the Victorian School Bus System.

3.3.8 Airport rehabilitation

There are a number of regional airports in the SEATS region that serve passenger and freight purposes. However, it is beyond the ability of the responsible Councils to enable timely rehabilitation of airport tarmacs to meet existing and new loading requirements.

3.3.9 Bus regulation

A number of previous studies have raised the concept of policy changes to be made to existing NSW Department of Motor Transport rules, and Victorian regulations to enable interstate passenger buses to pick up and set down intrastate passengers within New South Wales and Victoria.

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A. SEATS CONSTITUENT MEMBERS

<p>Local Government</p> <p>Victoria</p> <p>Bass Coast Shire Council</p> <p>Baw Baw Shire Council</p> <p>Cardinia Shire Council</p> <p>City of Casey Council</p> <p>City of Greater Dandenong Council</p> <p>City of Latrobe Council</p> <p>East Gippsland Shire Council</p> <p>South Gippsland Shire Council</p> <p>Wellington Shire Council</p> <p>New South Wales</p> <p>Bega Valley Shire Council</p> <p>Bombala Shire Council</p> <p>Cooma-Monaro Shire Council</p> <p>Eurobodalla Shire Council</p> <p>Palerang Shire Council</p> <p>Queanbeyan City Council</p> <p>Shoalhaven City Council</p> <p>Southern Councils Group</p> <p>Snowy River Shire Council</p> <p>Tumut Shire Council</p> <p>Wollongong City Council</p>	<p>State Agencies and Corporations</p> <p>Dept. of Sustainability & Environment, Victoria</p> <p>Port Kembla Port Corporation</p> <p>Port of Hastings Corporation</p> <p>Roads and Traffic Authority NSW</p> <p>VicRoads</p> <p>Area Consultative Committees and Development Boards</p> <p>Capital Region Area Consultative Committee</p> <p>Capital Regional Development Board (ACT and NSW)</p> <p>Gippsland Area Consultative Committee</p> <p>Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee</p> <p>South East Area Consultative Committee</p> <p>Transport Providers, User Representatives and Freight Movers</p> <p>Bega Cheese</p> <p>Cocks Group</p> <p>Dyers Transport - Gippsland</p> <p>Gippsland Transport Champions</p> <p>Grendas Transit Management</p> <p>Monash University Gippsland Campus</p> <p>NRMA</p> <p>Softwoods Working Group</p> <p>South East Fibre Exports</p>
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