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Submission title: Submission to Infrastructure Australia on behalf of the South East Australian Transport Strategy Inc (SEATS)  
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No. of pages: 14 (excluding Submission Cover sheet)  
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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)**

**October 2008**

**Prepared by: Ralf Kastan  
SEATS Executive (2005-2008)**

**Chris Vardon OAM  
Chief Executive Officer**

# 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](http://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.

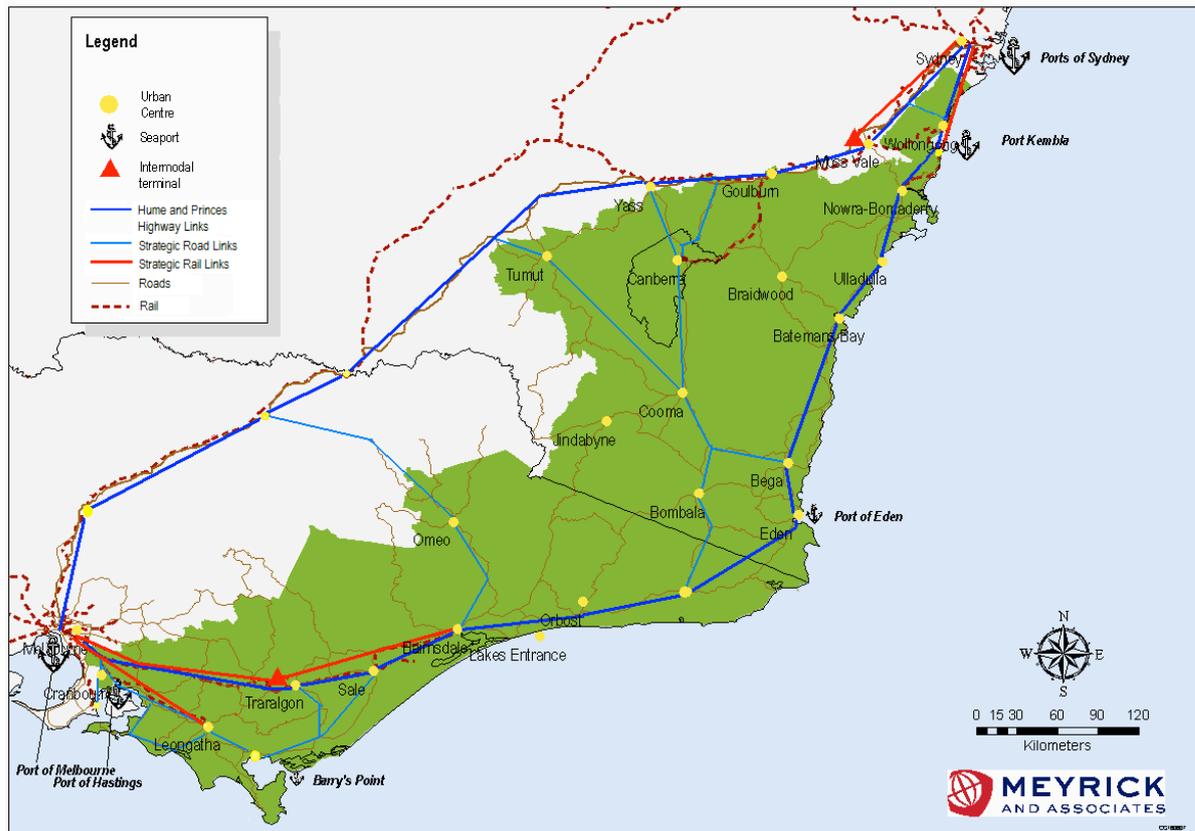
In selecting the strategic network SEATS members agreed that at least three of the criteria below would need to be met.

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.

## SEATS Strategic Network



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

## 4 Resolving Transport Problems

SEATS takes a strategic non-parochial approach, with the assistance of its members, to advocate for transport projects. Respected transport issues journalist Dale Crisp in an article, about SEATS, in the Shipping Gazette – Australia, October 13, 2007 states “this seems to me to be a very enlightened approach and in stark contrast to the usual competitive and selfish attitudes on display elsewhere”.

Federal funding for Network planning at a regional, cross regional and State level that supports Councils and State authorities to carry out joint planning would greatly assist in understanding economic drivers and project priorities. SEATS would be pleased to extend its network planning effort which is currently significantly constrained by local funding limitations. The Strategic Network planning work already undertaken would be greatly enhanced by adding economic and social analysis. This work is estimated to cost \$150,000, and could be undertaken by SEATS if funding was provided as it was for SEATS to oversee the Gippsland Transport Study completed in 2005.

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.