



Draft Greater Newcastle Future Transport Plan

NSW Department of Transport

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Introduction

Established in 1886, the Hunter Business Chamber (“the Chamber”) is the largest regional business chamber in Australia. The Chamber independently represents over 2,000 member organisations to all levels of government and is the peak industry association in the region, reflecting the interests of all business sectors.

The Chamber works as an integral part of the NSW Business Chamber network and represents business at local, state and federal level to advocate for an improved operational climate for businesses in this region.

The Hunter is well recognised as home to Australia’s most resilient and diverse regional economy. The Hunter region north of Sydney covers over 31,000 square kilometres and has over 660,000 people or 9% of the state’s population.

An unparalleled cross section of industry calls the Hunter region home. Newcastle is the eighth largest city in Australia and is renowned for being the world's largest coal export port. The Port and Newcastle Airport are significant global gateways and have grown exponentially over the past ten years.

Newcastle, as the second largest city of NSW and the capital of the Hunter, has the ability to be a world-class city, given its coastal location and access to infrastructure. It is home to world-class health, research and education facilities as well as a range of complementary and emerging industries such as renewable energy technologies, the defence industry, tourism and the digital economy.

The Chamber has long been an advocate for appropriate local and state planning and infrastructure strategies that integrate to provide a solid framework and actions for accommodating future growth of the Hunter’s potential.

The Chamber welcomes the release of the Draft Greater Newcastle Future Transport Plan (“the Plan”) in providing a vision for transportation, and the supporting strategies that will enable its effective implementation. Efficient and reliable transport systems are crucial to the ongoing growth of regional centres and their connectivity to larger cities and metropolitan centres. This in turn has significant and positive effects on business and the visitor economy.

Support for elements of the Plan

The Hunter Business Chamber endorses much of the Plan. The Chamber provides particular support for specific parts of the Plan, as follows.

The Chamber is pleased to see Newcastle acknowledged as a “*Global Gateway City*”, given the city’s robust potential to continue contributing to the growth of New South Wales, and contribute to the ambitions outlined in the NSW Government’s Hunter Regional Plan 2036.

Further, the Chamber supports the “*Greater Newcastle Initiatives*” that will be investigated, starting on page 13 of the Plan, and encourages the completion of the investigations as soon as possible.

The Chamber welcomes the *“Greater Newcastle transport vision”* (page 28 of the Plan). In particular, the Chamber agrees, *“Freight is crucial to Greater Newcastle’s economy and role as a Global Gateway City. We will protect freight through movements and reinforce key links to the Port and Airport that serve Greater Newcastle as well as reduce the volume of freight trains travelling through urban areas.”*

The Chamber is pleased to see that, on page 30 of the Plan, *“integrated transport networks will be developed for each strategic centre as part of our precinct planning process and in consideration of the Movement and Place framework.”*

The Hunter Business Chamber supports the Plan’s commitment (page 40 and 56) to address pinch points in the road network and inform the program of road network optimisation improvements including:

- Inner city bypass – Rankin Park to Jesmond
- The Lakes Way corridor
- Nelson Bay Road – Fern Bay to Williamtown
- Tomago Road – Pacific Highway to Williamtown
- M1 Pacific Motorway extension to Raymond Terrace
- New England Highway improvements
- Golden Highway improvements

The Chamber welcomes the Plan’s commitment on page 41 to *“Support the efficient movement of freight through the region by ensuring freight connections along major highways, Newcastle port and airport meet the existing and future demand, including the protection and development of the Lower Hunter Freight corridor, improvements to the Main Northern Line to address freight pinch points and implementation of the Port Efficiency, Access and Integration Package.”*

The Chamber further supports the Plan’s commitment to *“Customer Outcome 9: Support the development of the Global Gateway Cities of Greater Newcastle and Canberra”*, on page 54. The Chamber provides particular support for the recommendation that *“the rail corridor infrastructure programs (faster rail) to the south east (Illawarra), north (Newcastle/Central Coast) and south west (Canberra) be prioritised to allow the new intercity fleet (NIF) to operate to its operational capacity for the benefit of both passenger and freight flows with significant travel time savings.”*

The Chamber supports the *“protection and development of the Lower Hunter Freight corridor, improvements to the Main Northern Line to address freight pinch points and implementation of the Port Efficiency, Access and Integration Package,”* highlighted on page 56.

Further recommendations to be addressed in the Plan

As mentioned in the Chamber’s response to the Draft Future Transport Strategy 2056, submitted in December 2017, there is a strong business case for including the Port of Newcastle in the New South Wales container freight strategy.

Also as mentioned in the Chamber’s response to the Draft Future Transport Strategy 2056, the NSW Government’s Hunter Regional Plan 2036 includes a goal to *“Promote diversification of operations at the Port of Newcastle and the Newcastle Airport and enhance d connectivity*

to the Asia-Pacific.” This element should also be included in the Draft Greater Newcastle Future Transport Plan.

The Chamber also supports “*A strategic approach to the provision of car parking needs to be considered for Greater Newcastle,*” highlighted on page 37 of the Plan. The Chamber would like to see this action implemented as a matter of priority, which will help alleviate reduced levels of patronage experienced by businesses in Newcastle as a result of light rail construction. The Chamber and Newcastle Now have substantial data about the impact of construction on businesses that can be shared as appropriate.

The Chamber encourages the NSW Government to continue to liaise with key logistics operators and stakeholders such as the Port of Newcastle, ARTC, other NSW Government agencies including TfNSW, Roads and Maritime Services and the Port Authority of NSW, federal government agencies, local government bodies, and users including freight and logistics service providers and import/export industry representatives. This will, among other benefits, help the NSW Government match transport service and infrastructure with the level of demand generated – an aim which is noted on page 23 of the Plan.

The Chamber recommends that road and rail infrastructure plans keep up with freight growth projections, as well as urbanization and complement the intent of other government plans.

Summary of recommendations for the Plan

- Expedite investigation of the “*Greater Newcastle Initiatives*”;
- Ensure Port of Newcastle is included in the New South Wales container freight strategy;
- Include a mechanism to contribute to diversification of operations at the Port of Newcastle and the Newcastle Airport;
- Implement “*A strategic approach to the provision of car parking for Greater Newcastle*” as a matter of priority;
- Continue to liaise with key stakeholders; and
- Ensure that road and rail infrastructure plans keep up with freight growth projections, as well as urbanization and complement the intent of other government plans.

Conclusion

The Hunter Business Chamber appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on the Draft Greater Newcastle Future Transport Plan and would welcome any further engagement around this matter.

Contact

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