

# Smart Travel Choices for South East Queensland: Broadening, Strengthening and Sustaining the Impact of Transport Planning, Infrastructure and Services

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## 1 Introduction

South East Queensland (SEQ) is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia – by 2026 an additional one million people will be living in the area. A consequence of this rapid growth has been an increase in travel and congestion. In fact, between 2001 and 2026, the estimated growth in vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) is expected to outstrip population growth. While the SEQ population is estimated to grow 1.7 per cent per annum, VKT is expected to grow 1.9 per cent per annum (Office of Urban Management, 2005).

The Queensland Government has recently undertaken planning to manage this growth through the *South East Queensland Regional Plan* (the SEQ Regional Plan). In addition, recent State Government commitments to both infrastructure and public transport service investments through the *South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program* (SEQIPP) and the *TransLink Network Plan* respectively, will help manage growth in VKT. However, the 2004 *Queensland Infrastructure Report Card* acknowledged that even with increases in transport funding, infrastructure and services will not be enough to sufficiently manage predicted traffic growth (Engineers Australia, 2004). It also notes that new transport infrastructure has a significant lead time, and is increasingly expensive to construct, maintain and operate.

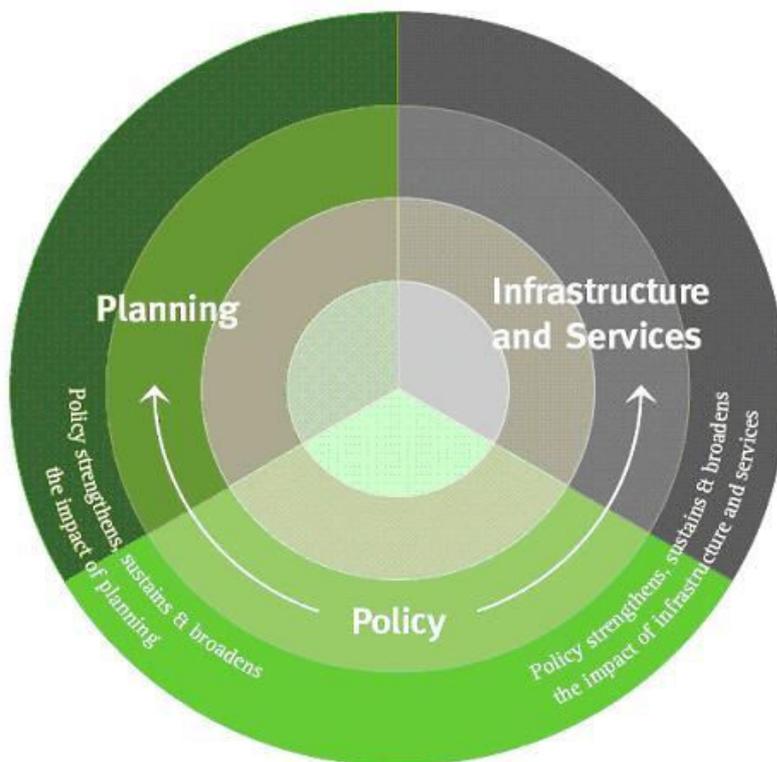
Thus the concept of introducing policy to manage Queensland's existing and future transport assets is gaining popularity. Further, integrating policy initiatives into infrastructure, services and planning will contribute to improving the efficiency, longevity and sustainability of these assets.

## 2 A whole of system approach

Queensland Transport aims to build a transport system where the elements of planning, infrastructure and services and policies reinforce and support the other. It is anticipated that by using an integrated approach, a better balance between transport modes and outcomes can be achieved across SEQ. This integrated approach will make the most out of the investment in the transport system in the region.

Figure 1 below represents the integral role of policy alongside infrastructure and services, and planning.

**Figure 1. Integrating policy with planning, infrastructure and services**



**Examples of Planning Initiatives:**

- SEQ Regional Plan
- Integrated Regional Transport Plan for SEQ

**Examples of Policy Initiatives:**

- TravelSmart
- Road safety campaigns
- Parking strategies
- Intelligent Transport Systems

**Examples of Infrastructure/Service Initiatives:**

- South East Busway
- Tugun Bypass
- TransLink service improvements
- Integrated ticketing
- Gateway Upgrade
- SEQIPP

Policy initiatives can be cost-effective ways of managing transport assets, tackling congestion and increasing the use of more sustainable transport options such as public transport, walking and cycling. They can also be implemented to broaden, strengthen and sustain the impact of planning, infrastructure and service measures.

The redevelopment of Suncorp Stadium in the inner west of Brisbane City provides an example of the successful integration of policy with planning and infrastructure and services. This project combined infrastructure and service improvements (a walking path from Milton Railway Station and additional train and bus services during large events) with a range of transport policy initiatives (ticketing incentives and parking restrictions). The result has been that 80% of patrons travel to the venue by public transport for major events. As such, the amenity of the surrounding residential community has not been compromised by a significant increase in traffic accessing the venue for events.

### **3 The project**

The success of Suncorp Stadium redevelopment provides evidence to support the benefits of integrating policy with other development plans, infrastructure and public transport services. *Smart Travel Choices for South East Queensland: A Transport Green Paper* (the Green Paper), released in December 2005, canvassed a suite of possible transport policy initiatives designed to repeat this success and make the most of the Queensland Government's investment in planning and transport infrastructure and services.

At the heart of the Green Paper is recognition that continued growth in VKT in SEQ is unsustainable. While motor vehicles will remain the only viable option for many trips, the potential for converting some car trips to walking, cycling or public transport trips is

enormous. In 2004 and 2005 Queensland Transport commissioned an SEQ In-depth Travel Behaviour Survey in the Brisbane suburbs of Taringa, Aspley and Woolloongabba and parts of the Redland Shire. In-depth interviews covered perceptions, attitudes and potentials for behaviour change.

The survey revealed that about 40 per cent of all current car driver and passenger trips could be replaced by walking, cycling and/or public transport (Queensland Transport, 2005a). The policies identified in the Green Paper could provide mechanisms for making this potential a reality.

The Green Paper also suggested initiatives designed to improve the management of those motor vehicle trips that cannot be replaced by alternative modes. Another impact of rapid growth in SEQ is the growth in the freight task, which is anticipated to double over the next 20 years. The Green Paper suggested a number of options for moving and managing freight in SEQ.

The Queensland Government has achieved a lot with the planning, infrastructure and service initiatives it has undertaken to date. To be proactive about preserving the liveability of the region, some things have to be done differently. The Green Paper aimed to make the most of this investment through a suite of policy initiatives. On its own, each initiative suggested in the Green Paper could have real benefits. However, the effect of one initiative alone might be modest. A suite of complementary initiatives, targeting different locations and demographics, and implemented in conjunction with planning, infrastructure and services, will be an even greater force for positive change.

The policy initiatives in the Green Paper aimed to achieve this change by:

- encouraging efficient land use
- strengthening our public transport system
- improving community access to jobs and services
- encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport
- helping the freight industry increase efficiency.

#### **4 The policies**

Acknowledging that about 40 per cent of all current car driver and passenger trips could be replaced by walking, cycling and/or public transport in SEQ, many of the policies identified in the Green Paper were targeted at this potential for change. Recognising that cars remain necessary for some trips, the Green Paper also targeted initiatives designed to improve the flow of traffic and manage the movement of freight.

The initiatives were selected through an evidence-based policy approach. Initiatives that had been previously successful in other cities in Australia and overseas were evaluated, and considered in terms of their suitability in the SEQ context. Initiatives that: encouraged partnerships; focused on incentives; could be tailored to SEQ; complemented planning, infrastructure and service measures; and were mutually supportive were selected where possible.

Eight themes were included in Smart Travel Choices to group initiatives. The eight key themes and associated initiatives are discussed below.

#### **4.1 Public transport... *a real choice***

Initiatives provided for discussion under this theme sought to build on the infrastructure and service improvements outlined in the TransLink Network Plan. In addition, SEQIPP identifies an \$8.5 billion investment in public transport infrastructure. The public transport initiatives aim to make public transport a real and attractive alternative to the car, encouraging increased patronage and making the most out of this investment. Initiatives canvassed included:

- Extending the range of discounts and rewards to encourage regular and frequent travel by public transport.
- Trialling free public transport trips on the opening day of new services, routes or facilities.
- Improving the flexibility of public transport services.
- Improving and extending the availability of public transport information including real time information, for example through SMS.
- Negotiating with the Federal Government to include cycling equipment and employee's public transport fares as part of salary packaging schemes.
- Piloting a program to offer incentives (for example TransLink Smartcard credit, bicycle and newer car discounts) for scrapping pre-1987 (formerly leaded fuel) cars.

#### **4.2 Active transport... *getting there, getting fit***

The In-depth Travel Behaviour Survey undertaken in SEQ found that 10% of private car trips were less than one kilometre or less, with 34% being less than three kilometres (Queensland Transport, 2005a). These short trips are clearly suitable for cycling and walking, if the right conditions are provided (such as good supporting infrastructure, climate and safety). This suggests that up to one third of private car trips in SEQ could potentially be replaced by walking and cycling. Further, SEQIPP identifies a \$356 million commitment to cycling and walking infrastructure. The active transport initiatives canvassed in the Green Paper aim to make it easier for people to choose to cycle and walk more often and for more trips and consequently make the most of this investment.

Active transport initiatives canvassed in the Green Paper included:

- Partnering with employers to provide better walking and cycling facilities in workplaces.
- Trialling cycle centres in the town centres of selected local government areas.
- Collaborating with local government to:
  - provide pedestrian facilities walkable environments around public transport stations and schools; and
  - re-examine speed limits in select local streets which are actively used by high volumes of pedestrians.
- Assisting local governments and the community to develop and implement physical activity programs aimed at encouraging walking and cycling.

Since the release of the Green Paper, the Queensland Government held an Obesity Summit in May 2006. Assisting local governments, schools and community organisations implement physical activity programs was funded as one of a number of initiatives announced at the Obesity Summit – thus making a stronger connection between health and active transport modes.

### **4.3 Location... *within your reach***

The location initiatives aim to encourage land use and development that provide communities and residents with greater access to goods and services within closer proximity of where they work, live or play. The location of these goods and services can reduce travel demand or the need to travel greater distances, making it easier for people to cycle or walk for some trips. Initiatives canvassed under this theme are closely aligned with the SEQ Regional Plan, and include:

- Including policy initiatives in the planning for transit oriented development sites.
- Improving policies, guidelines and incentives to encourage developers to provide more connective street networks in new developments.
- Trialling a web-based tool that:
  - guides the provision of public transport and other services in more convenient locations; and
  - helps home-buyers and renters find out how accessible residences are to public transport and other services.
- Encouraging developers to contribute to state provided cycling and public transport infrastructure that supports urban growth.
- Accelerating the strategic purchase of land for future transport corridors and public transport nodes.
- Significantly enhancing cooperation with local governments to encourage local projects which support regional priorities.

### **4.4 Parking... *where, when and how much***

The Green Paper recognised that parking has a big influence on how people travel. A survey in San Francisco showed that when free parking was provided, 77% of commuters drove alone to work. When they had to pay for parking, only 39% of commuters did this (Long, 2002).

Parking also takes up a lot of space. It has been estimated that for every vehicle in the city there is an additional four or five parking spaces. This is not including the car space people have at home in their garage or carport. Further to this, in a typical shopping centre, parking can occupy more land area than the shopping floor space (Shoup, 1999).

To enable other travel choices to function effectively, and use precious land more efficiently, many cities around the world have developed parking strategies. The Green Paper put forward a few initiatives based on examples previously tested nationally and internationally which included:

- Tailoring the amount of parking provided at key centres that are well served by public transport, for example discouraging long term parking at highly accessible places and improving parking in areas that are difficult to access by public transport.
- Supporting local governments to develop and implement parking strategies in local areas. Local parking strategies could include a range of ways to ensure parking spaces are used more efficiently, such as:
  - encouraging businesses or residents and businesses in mixed-use areas to share the same parking;
  - limiting parking duration to prioritise short-term users such as customers;
  - making the cost of a return public transport fare competitive with all-day parking;
  - adjusting parking supply and pricing zones to support residents' needs; and
  - supporting areas well serviced by public transport with detailed parking policies.

- Considering parking licensing schemes to assist in managing in areas well served by public transport.

#### **4.5 Promoting choice... *changing the face of travel***

Car trips account for 80% of all trips in SEQ (Queensland Transport, 2005b). In order for people to replace some of these journeys with walking, cycling or public transport, they have to be aware of suitable alternatives. Surveys show that information about how to use public transport services, or where bicycle facilities are, does not always reach the people that need it (Marinelli and Roth, 2002).

The Green Paper canvassed initiatives that would provide better information for people to use more sustainable travel modes such as walking, cycling, public transport or car sharing. Examples included:

- Accelerating and extending TravelSmart Communities programs across SEQ.
- Implementing a marketing campaign to promote and encourage more walking, cycling and public transport use.
- Accelerating school travel initiatives.
- Accelerating and expanding the implementation of TravelSmart travel plans for workplaces, destinations, schools and events.
- Providing incentives for the establishment and maintenance of car share clubs.

#### **4.6 Traffic management... *more reliable travel***

Due to the increasing activity occurring in urban areas, often there is little scope for expanding or widening existing transport corridors. Improving the way the system functions can often be the best choice. An example of potential outcomes was demonstrated by a traffic signal coordination project conducted on 14 signalised routes on the Sunshine Coast in 2002. This project resulted in significant improvements in travel times, speeds and traffic flows. Vehicle operating costs and emissions were reduced. A 20% decrease in travel times across the relevant road network was achieved (Dia, 2004).

Whilst there are traffic management systems in place in SEQ, there are still potential avenues to explore and expand to further reduce traffic delays and air pollution. Some of the initiatives discussed in the Green Paper included:

- Working with local authorities to improve traffic signal coordination across SEQ.
- Continuing to improve the management of traffic incidents by:
  - improving procedures, training and equipment; for incident monitoring, investigation and response;
  - increasing network coverage of videos, sensors and other devices; and
  - improving signage on roads and cycleways to assist emergency services to locate and respond to an incident.
- Prioritising emergency vehicles and buses more efficiently on the road network, by:
  - having ramps to freeways "ramp-metered"; and
  - having special queue-jump lanes for those categories of vehicles to be given priority.
- Significantly broadening the provision of travel information to inform drivers of traffic conditions, anticipated travel times to key destinations, and route diversions in the event of traffic incidents.
- Trialling the provision of variable speed limits on select routes, to enable sign-posted speed limits to reflect changed traffic conditions.
- Extending the trial of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology.

- Expanding existing vehicle emissions testing arrangements, targeting worst offender vehicles.
- Piloting a scheme which enables insurance and/or registration fees to more closely reflect the distance travelled by motorists.
- Providing incentives to motorists for using more fuel-efficient and smaller vehicles.

#### **4.7 Freight... *swift seamless delivery***

The SEQ Regional Plan identified a challenge in finding ways to improve transport efficiency so road space is shared effectively between heavy vehicles, passenger vehicles and cyclists, as well as rail space shared between passenger and freight. This will assist in avoiding adverse impacts caused by growth in SEQ on freight transport costs and time.

The Green Paper recognised that most freight travel in SEQ involves short trips and will remain predominantly on road. With this in mind, initiatives put forward for discussion included:

- Working with industry to implement a Smart Freight Demonstration Program, showcasing the application of technologies and best practices in the freight industry.
- Managing and sequencing traffic signals along priority freight routes.
- Extending the use of transit lanes in SEQ by allowing freight vehicles to use the lanes during off-peak times without compromising safety standards.
- Trialling a freight route choice guidance project, that uses variable message signs at strategic locations to advise the travel times for various route options.

#### **4.8 Government innovation... *leading by example***

Some of the initiatives canvassed focussed on the Queensland Government becoming a role model for smart travel choices in SEQ. The following policies were suggested as ways the government could lead by example, inspiring others to make smart travel choices:

- Introducing TravelSmart workplace travel plans to more government workplaces to increase staff awareness about smart travel choices.
- Locating more government offices, facilities and services near regional activity centres and public transport.
- Accelerating and maximising the use of more fuel efficient vehicles in the government fleet.
- Improving access to government facilities by walking, cycling and public transport.
- Extending the provision of showers, changing rooms, lockers and bicycle parking facilities in government buildings.

### **5 Community consultation**

The Green/White Paper process allowed Queensland Transport to present possible transport policy initiatives to the community as ideas to consider before finalising a formal government policy position. The Green Paper was intended to promote public debate on smart travel choices.

To encourage feedback, a range of documents and feedback channels were made available. Three documents were distributed: a comprehensive stakeholder report, community booklet, and discussion paper for young adults. Feedback channels by which community members and other relevant stakeholders could provide comments included:

- reply paid surveys attached to the community booklet and discussion paper for young adults;
- an email and postal address; and
- an online survey provided on Consult Queensland's website [www.getinvolved.com.au](http://www.getinvolved.com.au)

Queensland Transport also promoted the project through:

- a brochure mailed out to all households in SEQ;
- presentations at free information sessions held around the region;
- a teachers guide, outlining how the discussion paper for young adults could be incorporated into the secondary school curriculum;
- shopping centre displays; and
- 'Shape the Future of SEQ' newspaper, press and radio advertisements.

## **5.1 Results of consultation**

South East Queenslanders are increasingly sophisticated consumers of regional planning issues. The media has helped insert the transport agenda into our community dialogue and encouraged interest in government process and decision making.

Federal, state and local governments are continuously working to inform and engage the community on a number of fronts and projects. Although the market is sometimes saturated with consultation programs competing for community participation and feedback, people want to be informed and involved in the decisions that affect the way they play, live, work and travel.

The Green Paper consultation occurred in an environment of raised awareness of transport and regional planning issues and opportunities. It extended community consultation beyond the more traditional focus on planning, infrastructure and services. While the concept of transport "policy" is relatively new, the Green Paper is the start of an ongoing dialogue with the community on key transport policy directions.

Approximately 1,750 respondents provided feedback through the various feedback channels made available during community consultation on the Green Paper. Whilst two-thirds of submissions were from individuals, responses were also received from government, business, industry, professional, community and interest groups. Almost one fifth of the total responses received were reply-paid surveys for the discussion paper for young adults, showing the next generation of transport users were engaged in the discussion. People and organisations from all over SEQ provided feedback. The largest group was from the Greater Brisbane region. The Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Darling Downs regions were also well represented.

The consultation results showed there is support for the overall policy direction for smart travel choices. Public transport and active transport were identified by respondents as the highest priorities. This illustrates there is growing community support for delivering sustainable transport policy outcomes.

Many respondents thought infrastructure and services are still important. For example, respondents said they were more likely to make smart travel decisions, such as choosing to cycle, walk or use public transport, if the supporting infrastructure and services were available in their local area.

## **6 What comes next?**

Community feedback on the Green Paper is being reviewed to determine the community's and stakeholder's priorities for SEQ. The policies canvassed in the Green Paper are also being further assessed in terms of their economic, environmental and social benefits.

The results of these feasibility studies along with the results of community consultation will help the government to decide on the best policies for SEQ. These will be outlined in a White Paper; a statement of government policy. The Smart Travel Choices for SEQ White Paper will detail the Queensland Government's commitment to action.

The White Paper is currently planned to be released in 2006/07 and will set out the transport initiatives that will be implemented in SEQ.

## **7 Conclusion**

The results of the Green Paper consultation show that transport policy in SEQ is gaining momentum. There appears to be recognition among both government decision makers and the community that policy completes the picture in terms of broadening, strengthening and sustaining the impact of transport planning, infrastructure and services. Through the White Paper, the Queensland Government will commit to implementing transport policies concurrently with the planning for land use, services and infrastructure currently taking place in SEQ. This presents a unique opportunity to shape the transport system in the region and make the most out of the Government's investment.

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