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## **Implementing Perth's Metropolitan Transport Strategy**

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### **Abstract**

The Metropolitan Transport Strategy (MTS) for Perth, Western Australia, is a strategic change document developed through interagency research and analysis and considerable local government, public, industry and other stakeholder involvement

Implementation of the MTS over 35 years (1995 - 2029) is based on three distinct themes which reflect societal values in Perth and ongoing evolution in State Government responsibilities and priorities

The first theme, partnerships, builds on the strong sense of common ownership for the MTS directions and proposals which were developed in during its preparation.

The second theme, policy development, has occupied all affected Government agencies and has been spread through less directly responsible agencies.

Planning, the third theme, is more recently being applied within the policies and through the partnerships which have been developed. The emerging importance of integrated transport planning is becoming more broadly recognised.

Upcoming challenges include the ongoing loss of senior Government transport personnel who were the original champions of the MTS, and our heritage of past transport and urban development decisions.

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## Introduction

For almost 20 years prior to 1995 urban planning professionals worked towards a broadly agreed strategic statement to guide the development of Perth's transport system.

Perth, like most other Western land extensive urban regions, had moved strongly away from public transport to private car use between the 1950s and 1980. Although car ownership in Perth lagged that of Western Europe, Canada and the United States of America, the public transport mode share had fallen significantly and car use had risen correspondingly. Deregulation of the freight system was placing more freight on rural and urban roads and industrial activities and employment were becoming less centralised.

Transport planning was largely concerned with ensuring that road reservations were wide enough to allow for the predicted number of low occupancy vehicles to travel without congestion throughout the region. Actively promoting car pools, cycling, urban villages and travel demand management was viewed as a fringe activity, limited to academics and radicals. However, there was already concern in some local neighbourhoods about the intrusion of the major roads.

*Transport 2000* (1982) represented Perth's first professional statement about the important role of public transport in a sustainable transport system. However, this statement was visionary, and largely ignored in transport investment decisions.

*Metroplan* (1990) was produced as a strategic land use planning policy statement for the Perth Metropolitan Region. Its ambit included residential and commercial centre development, strategic regional centres which were to become the foci for employment, services and cultural activities and the locations to which industrial activities should be directed. *Metroplan* called for the preparation of a Metropolitan Transport Strategy to provide a strategic framework for transport development in the Region.

The *Metropolitan Transport Strategy* (1995) was then developed (1991 - 1995) by a full time interagency task force having senior representation from the Ministry for Planning, Main Roads WA, Transperth (the Government public transport operator) and Transport (at that time primarily a policy agency). Consultation processes included a series of workshops for identified stakeholders and the general public, broadly circulated issues papers and meetings with specific interest groups and stakeholders. The final Strategy was agreed by the Chief Executives of the sponsoring agencies and released by the Ministry for Transport.

### **Perth's Metropolitan Transport Strategy (MTS)**

Perth's MTS is unabashedly a strategic change document. It states:

*"... the trends towards increasing car use, lower occupancy and longer trip distances need to be reversed." (MTS, p3)*

*"... it is already clear that simply continuing and expanding the current transport system will not meet the Region's long-term requirements.*

*"The past decade has seen increasing vehicle emissions and atmospheric pollution, growing road congestion and traffic delays, increasing concern about traffic accidents and personal injury, and rising complaints about traffic noise. Constructing and maintaining the road system is becoming increasingly expensive, yet people without easy use of a car have limited transport options.*

*"The Metropolitan Transport Strategy proposes directions for moving from a transport system which is dominated by low occupancy car use to a more balanced transport system, in which public transport and non-motorised transport options are feasible for many trips. ...." (MTS, p9)*

These changes would redirect the prevailing trends in transport system use, which over the three decades to 1995 were towards more and lower occupancy car use, and a decreasing proportion of travel by public transport, bicycle and walking.

The MTS comprises several sections. The first outlines the opportunities and problems offered by Perth's existing transport system. The second states principles on which an urban transport system should be based (safety, efficiency, effectiveness, environmental responsibility, social responsibility and robustness), defines objectives which relate to the principles, and provides targets for the objectives. This second section is the core of the MTS and provides the key performance indicators for Perth's transport system. The third section of the MTS contains short statements of status, targets, policies and actions for an integrated transport system, integrating transport with land use and the individual elements of a transport system. The last section outlines implementation and review processes.

Implementing the MTS raises two major difficulties. Firstly, any change strategy generates opposition from established interests who may be either threatened or uncertain about the changes. Secondly, a long term strategy may be ignored in the short term if there is no immediate and ongoing effort into initiating the required changes. Implementation of the MTS has addressed these difficulties through developing partnerships, policies and plans which promote the principles and objectives of the MTS.

## **Partnerships**

The most important force for implementing the MTS has been the common ownership of its objectives by State and Local Government, industry and the public

### **Partnerships in State Government**

The importance of developing and maintaining partnerships to achieve the objectives of the MTS was recognised from the initial stages of conceptualising the document and integrated in the process for preparing it. The core partnership supporting the MTS relates to the mutual commitment within state Government agencies to develop an MTS and the commitment of resources to develop its objectives and targets. This was cemented through the establishment and close working relationships of the multi-agency working group and the extended process of developing the Strategy more broadly through each agency.

This partnership at State Government level has resulted in the MTS being a basic reference for major policies which the sponsoring agencies have developed following the release of the MTS. State Government partnerships have been extended to include agencies which have important, if slightly less direct interest in Perth's transport activities: Westrail, Landcorp and Homeswest, and the departments of Environmental Protection, Minerals and Energy, Economic Development and Resources Development. Changes outlined in the MTS and resulting implications for travel, transport and land use decisions may require responses within the established plans of these agencies or provide a framework for new initiatives. Because it takes time for any established entity to change direction, partnerships are particularly important.

### **Partnerships with Local Government and the Public**

Local Government and other public stakeholders were involved in developing the conceptual bases for the MTS, through direct consultation and workshop participation. Following the release of the MTS, Transport and the other sponsoring agencies undertook a series of presentations and public meetings throughout the Metropolitan Region. Most discussions at these meetings related to matters of local topical interest, such as road repair and the level of public transport services. It was valuable to discuss these matters within the context of a broader long term strategy, both to demonstrate how the local issues fit in with the regional transport task and also to highlight upcoming major transport issues and the utility of the MTS to address them.

Local government and the public will inevitably focus on local issues, whether this is to promote road building or oppose it, demand more bus services or seek to reduce them, or enhance pedestrian facilities or close public accessways. The MTS provides an agenda within which the contrasting scales and areas of interest (spatial, temporal and financial) between State Government and Local Government and the public can be managed

### Partnerships with Special Interest Groups

A wide range of special interest groups was invited to attend workshops and was specifically consulted by the interagency team which developed the MTS. Following the release of the MTS, briefing sessions and discussions were held with these groups. During the past 4 years the MTS has formed the basis of discussions and negotiations on specific matters ranging from limiting the environment impact of transport activities to establishing rail freight infrastructure.

### Policy Development

The MTS is a strategic change document. As such it provides a broad statement of the system changes required to accomplish the transport tasks Perth's community will require in the future. Policies have been developed since 1995 at two scales: firstly to establish these changes within the panorama of Government policy directions and secondly to elaborate the MTS directions so that plans can be prepared to implement specific actions to achieve the targets set for MTS objectives.

### Land Use Planning

Transport is undertaken to support other activities such as work, education, shopping, leisure or waste removal. The relative location of these activities to each other and to residential developments is a major determinant of the amount and nature of transport activities which are undertaken in a community.

Decisions about locating activities are made in land use planning processes: in Western Australia by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) or by a subsidiary body through delegated authority. In 1998 the WAPC completed its highest level policy statement, the State Planning Strategy. Because it champions the MTS in its own right, and because analysis supported the change proposals contained in the MTS, the State Planning Strategy defines the completion and implementation of the MTS as one of six land use planning priorities for the Metropolitan Region. This means not only that the WAPC and its policy framework is supportive of the MTS, but also that it will over time embrace the changes which the MTS proposes. As an example, the WAPC is currently preparing a draft policy relating to integrating land use and transport planning and implementation which arises from the State Planning Strategy and is in line with the MTS.

### Environmental Management

Transport is a major contributor to urban air quality degradation and noise and to Greenhouse gas emissions. Implementing the MTS changes would result in an urban transport system which would have substantially fewer vehicles and shorter trips. The MTS has therefore found expression through Australia's National Greenhouse Strategy, Perth's (draft) Air Quality Management Plan (in preparation) and the State Government's

response to the State of the Environment Report. Implementation of this Strategy, Plan and response will help implement the MTS changes

#### Integrated Transport Planning

One of the major changes required for Perth's future transport system to achieve the MTS mode specific targets is to move from mode specific planning to integrated transport planning. A strategy for integrated transport planning, which is currently being finalised, will outline responsibilities and priorities for preparing integrated transport plans in the Perth Metropolitan Region. This strategy builds on our early experience in this endeavour

#### Planning

The MTS provides a set of broad directions for car use, public transport, cycling, walking, access for people with disabilities, freight, goods and services transport, access to intermodal sites including sea and air ports and road development. However, much more detailed plans are required to achieve these directions.

#### Integrated Transport Plans

Since 1995 integrated plans have been prepared, in conjunction with the relevant local authority or facility manager, for a few subregional and local areas and major destinations. The Heritage Country Integrated Transport Strategy explored how the MTS could be applied in an outer metropolitan locality. In developing this Strategy, the MTS' modal share targets were reviewed and interpreted for an outer regional area, and transport service, information and infrastructure developments were recommended to achieve the subregional targets. Local area plans have been developed for the inner urban City of Subiaco and the middle urban City of Melville. Destination plans have been developed for Central Perth, Curtin University, the University of Western Australia / Queen Elizabeth II complex and the Murdoch / St John of Gods complex. Each of these plans has a distinct character, but each is directly derived from the MTS and seeks to achieve the directions it sets. The next stage of integrated transport plans is to focus on transport task corridors.

#### Modal Transport Plans

Plans for individual transport modes have also been developed to provide a more refined framework for these elements within an integrated transport system. Completed strategies and detailed plans relate to public transport (*Better Public Transport*, 1998), cycling (*Perth Bicycle Plan*, 1996) and transport for people with disabilities (*Going Out and Getting There*, 1996) while strategies for freight movement in the Perth Metropolitan Region (*Freight Transport Strategy*) and walking (*Pedestrian Strategy*) are nearing completion.

### Information Plans

A major theme of the MTS is that individuals should have a realistic range of transport options and sufficient information to choose the best option for any particular trip. While relatively there has been a significant amount of attention on developing transport infrastructure, there has been less focus placed on providing information to enable individuals to make choices that are good for themselves and the community. This is now being rectified to some extent through greater promotional activity by Transperth (for public transport), by Bikewest (for cycling) and through the TravelSmart individualised marketing program for the full range of travel options. *TravelSmart 2010: A 10-year plan* (1999) has just been released, which when implemented is expected to substantially increase the use of public transport, walking and cycling with little or no extra provision of infrastructure.

### Summary

The development of integrated, modal and information plans within an MTS framework has enabled State and Local governments see the long term cost effectiveness of individual transport related decisions. This has enabled decision makers to make relatively difficult choices in favour of public transport, cycling, and traffic and parking constraints.

### Our Achievements So Far

The Metropolitan Transport Strategy has a time horizon of 35 years, and a goal of changing trends in transport activity which are deeply embedded in Perth's social values and identity. There is no suggestion that significant changes to travel choice and transport demand can be achieved in the short term. However, early successful changes have been required to indicate that even in Perth changes can be made towards a sustainable transport system. Several major specific and concrete changes have already been made to transport investment and travel activity in Perth.

### Perth Parking Policy

The *Perth Parking Policy* (1999) has been approved by State Government and the City of Perth. It reduces maximum allowable tenant parking in the City of Perth, focuses shopper parking in the commercial heart of the City and establishes a parking licensing system and fee that will raise enough funds to support a free transit service within central Perth (Central Area Transit - CAT). Under the Policy, the supply of parking is for the first time regulated as part of the transport system, rather than being only considered within the planning and building approval system.

#### Central Perth's Travel Balance

Changes to the balance of space provided for motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians has been altered in favour of the latter through the *Perth Access Plan*. In the area to the east of Perth's pedestrian heart motor vehicle lanes have been converted to pedestrian space and bicycle contra-flow lanes. Plans to convert motor vehicle lanes in the area west of the pedestrian heart are currently being discussed with the City of Perth.

#### New buses and routes

In recognition of the need to expand and upgrade public transport services to regain market share, investments have been made in new buses and routes. The free CAT service was inaugurated in 1996, using medium sized low emission low floor buses. New low emission low floor buses are replacing the entire Transperth fleet over a period of 20 years through all the service area. They have first been introduced on the new Circle Route, which provides the first cross suburban link to major destinations in the middle suburbs. Buslanes have been expanded to improve the capacity for bus services to compete with car travel for commuter travel time to Perth from the middle suburbs.

#### New cycleways

The release of the *Perth Bicycle Plan* prompted a major increase in State Government funding for cycle facilities, due in large part to the clear place cycling was given within Perth's sustainable transport system. This funding has allowed the construction of the first elements of regional cycleways along the suburban passenger line through Claremont and into Perth from West Perth.

#### Better services for people with mobility difficulties

Improved travel opportunities for people with disabilities have been provided by purchasing low floor buses, expanding the wheelchair accessible taxi fleet and improving passenger train station facilities.

#### TravelSmart in South Perth

Individualised marketing has been trialed in South Perth to investigate its capacity to shift travel choice from low occupancy private vehicle to public transport, cycling or walking. The success of this trial has led to an expanded trial in the same locality, which is currently being implemented.



#### Kewdale intermodal terminal

The importance of efficient freight movement to and within the Perth Metropolitan Region, as outlined in the MTS, led to a recognition of the importance of the Kewdale freight terminal to competitive rail services and to the resulting capacity of rail freight to compete with road freight transport. State Government decided to maintain Kewdale for competitive road/rail intermodal use and that access between the Kewdale terminal and the region's major road network needed to be upgraded. This decision is now being implemented.

### **The Challenges We Now Face**

There are several major challenges to implementing the MTS: ongoing commitment to the MTS' principles and targets, the inertia of current transport planning and funding approaches and Perth's built form.

#### The need for ongoing commitment

The Transport portfolio has been losing a high proportion of its experienced professional urban transport staff over the past 4 years. A great proportion of the remaining transport professionals who developed the MTS will retire within the next 5 years. These changes will result in a loss most of the professionals who debated the bases, rationale, directions and specifics of the MTS. Support for the MTS as a strategic transport policy will only be maintained if future professionals make new versions of it which reflect future requirements for transport sustainability and future understanding about how this can be achieved. Our challenge now is to find these professionals and to engage them actively in this process.

#### Inertia in transport planning and implementation

Many decisions about investment over the coming 10 years in urban transport infrastructure and services were made prior to the MTS being released. Several decisions since the MTS' release have reflected past transport provision approaches. It will be difficult, but it is essential, to alter current approaches to transport planning and implementation. Establishing an integrated transport planning group in Transport will help to alleviate this challenge, but it will not in itself address the residual inheritance of past transport investment decisions.

#### Perth's built form

As transport is a derived demand, Perth's built form will largely define the demand for travel and transport. Perth's low density spread suburbs, especially middle suburbs with limited permeability and disjointed employment locations, represent a major challenge for the development of a sustainable transport system. This situation is expected to become more problematic over coming years as there is enough land zoned for urban development

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to last until 2030 at low density development patterns and current urban growth rates. The extent of the challenge is indicated by current proposals to rezone even more land for low density urban development. The best resolution for this challenge will be greater awareness of the benefits of closer urban communities, a change which is likely to require the full time horizon of the MTS.

### **Conclusion**

The Metropolitan Transport Strategy provides a framework to achieve a sustainable transport system in the Perth Metropolitan Region.

Since the release of the MTS in 1995, there has been a major refocussing of transport planning from traffic movement to service outcomes.

However, past transport and urban development decisions have generated significant challenges for transport planners. It will take as long to meet the challenges as it has taken to generate them. It is likely to require at least as many resources.

*Implementing Perth's Metropolitan Transport Strategy*

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