

Re: Submissions and proposals Future Planning Strategy

My submission deals with the future transport planning for the Northern Rivers. I talk about planning provisions including light rail area, increased high levels of overseas tourists and increased population growth. Ever increasing numbers of tourists and population growth is a big factor to consider in planning transport for the coming years as problems are starting to appear. I think provision should be made to keep our existing rail corridor in the Northern Rivers intact for potential reinstatement of rail at a future date. I would like to have my submission considered.

Areas addressed are tourism and growth, traffic safety and maintenance of transport, community, economic viability and environment, rail needs for the future and protection of our rail corridor for future planning.

Tourism is growing rapidly in this Far North Coast, Northern Rivers area. We are a main destination point for tourists after Sydney. Overseas tourists want to come here, and it is a key destination point by international young travellers. Byron Bay is becoming a bottle neck with traffic and busses. Young tourists travel to this area by train and then have to cross over to busses to get to this area due to the service ending at Casino or they have to catch a bus from Grafton. Apparently, many overseas tourists like trains, as apparently, in many overseas countries trains service is a large factor of transport.

Also, more Australians are coming here which means many more cars as well. This area has so much tourism and I know it keeps the economy going. I am aware that the government also wants tourism for NSW and Federal Government wants tourism for our Country. It is an important issue for Australia but also an important issue to address in terms of transport to cater for so many people coming to and wanting to see more of our area. There is now a continual stream of Tourism and it is also rapidly growing. Rail was suspended in this area when it was much less of a growth area. It is now has huge growth if you include the tourists that reside here in a continual stream and population growth.

Having rail reinstated through the Rail Corridor from Casino to Byron Bay would alleviate the need of so much traffic congestion in such a small town centre.

4.6 million tourists a year and a population of 300 thousand in this area of the northern rivers where a future railway line could alleviate some of our transport needs for the future. Byron Bay is a place that everyone in this area appears to visit. Last year tourism increased from 1.5 million to 2 million according to Byron shire Council staff. Traffic of course increased. Lismore traffic numbers have also increased.

People are drawn to come to our area and something needs to be done to address transport infrastructure for the future. Light rail on the old rail corridor is a good solution to meet some of the transport needs of the future.

The rail corridor already exists and both LNP and Labor have in the past talked of one day reinstating rail to this area. The area keeps growing. Rail is much more of an option now than it was before. Overseas tourists pay to travel by rail. Europe has much rail connecting tourist destinations as do many other places.

I have read that there is talk of a future Gold Coast to Tweed Heads rail. I would think that linking a train service to there would boost tourism and yet still alleviate road transport and its high costs to the taxpayer when trying to boost tourism as a revenue source. Many tourists from overseas do not like to drive in a foreign country. I think it may have something to do with safety, accidents, unfamiliar road rules.

Buses are not as comfortable nor as quick as trains and so overseas tourists can often miss out on getting up to see villages and towns as easily that are on the rail historic Casino to Murwillumbah train line. The corridor I expect still exists further north and that is why Tweed Shire has made mention of bringing a line down to lower joining into the Murwillumbah to Casino line in their submission.

Rail services are also becoming more innovative and they now can run on different energy sources so that energy targets in curtailing carbon emissions could more easily met in future planning. There are many overseas countries now using innovative technologies with their trains. Safety is another consideration. It is much safer by rail than by car or bus.

Maintenance of roads costs more than maintenance of rail. In this area road maintenance has a big backlog of 430.7 million. Heavy vehicle use is expected to increase by 3.4 % every year to 2025 (working paper 6, BTRE p60). Traffic is becoming a real problem due to growth and tourism. Lismore is experiencing high volumes of traffic and Byron Bay is a bottle neck with busses and cars. So much traffic due to tourism numbers increasing and population growth as earlier stated. Light rail included in infrastructure transport planning for the future could alleviate some of the congestion

Legislation: We have an existing rail corridor for the Northern Rivers. Railway services existed, and rail was put on hold to be reopened one day when necessary according to both ALP and LNP. I think that any planning for the future should, in the very least, keep our rail corridor for rail services for future transport needs of our wider community. I have heard that bike people want to take it over our railway corridor and call it a rail trail and change the legislation to use it for mountain bikes, push bikes, trail bikes and motor bikes. To me that is absolutely ludicrous and dangerous when we really could do with railway services reinstated already. Let alone that I think it is a absolute necessity to have this land remain as a rail corridor for future transport needs and planning a strategy for sensible efficient transport for this area.

I hope you give my submission due consideration.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

[Name removed as requested].