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What is mass transit?
Mass transit is a large-scale, integrated public transportation system, which is located in an urban area and is designed to provide convenient travel between key destinations.

Why does the Sunshine Coast need a mass transit system?
With 200,000 more people expected to move to the Sunshine Coast by 2041, we need a public transport system that is integrated, sustainable and able to keep up with population growth, while supporting our growing economy and maintaining our lifestyle. It will also help reduce car dependency and associated road congestion.

Who is responsible for public transport in Queensland?
The Queensland Government is responsible for public transport services and infrastructure within the state. However, council is taking a proactive role in assessing and planning a potential mass transit solution for the Sunshine Coast in order to build the case to encourage and secure Queensland and Commonwealth Government investment in the project.

Mass Transit options

What sort of transport does a mass transit system provide?
Council is investigating all the current and emerging technologies. While light rail has been discussed in the past, the assessment of all viable options, including light rail and bus rapid transport, is a necessary part of ensuring the solution we choose is right for our region.

What is light rail (also known as LRT)?
The light rail technology being considered for the Sunshine Coast is similar to systems already operating in other Australian cities. The key feature of such a system is a dedicated trackway, often in the centre of the road. This allows the light rail vehicles (LRVs) to avoid congestion by having their own right-of-way. The LRVs are also equipped with sensors that trigger green a green lights as they approach intersections, saving time and making travel more reliable.

The system would have high-quality stations with level boarding to provide access for people of all abilities. Ticketing (tapping on/off) would occur on the platform rather than on the vehicle to speed up boarding.

What is Bus Rapid Transit or BRT?
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is very similar to light rail with the main difference being that the vehicles have rubber tyred wheels rather than tracks. The system being considered for the Sunshine Coast includes a dedicated busway, typically in the centre of the road. The location in the road centre improves efficiency in travel time as the vehicles are not impacted by use of kerbside lanes from turning vehicles, car parking and cyclists. The bus vehicles are also equipped with sensors that trigger green lights as they approach intersections, saving time and making travel more reliable.

The BRT system would also have high quality stops and stations, level boarding, and on-platform ticketing.

Standard route buses would not use the mass transit busway as the system supports specially-designed, extra-long, electric powered vehicles. This is necessary to allow traffic signal priority for the BRT vehicle to ensure efficiency and reliability.

The BRT requires an investment similar to that of light rail.

This BRT system is different to the Brisbane Busways which are separated from general traffic, crossing congested roads on bridges or in
tunnels. An elevated system was considered in the pre-feasibility study *A Line in the Sand*, but this was considered undesirable as it would have impacts on the visual appeal of the Sunshine Coast.

**What is a quality bus corridor or QBC?**

A quality bus corridor allows buses to run in the kerbside lanes with additional features such as queue jumps at critical intersections, and branding of buses and stations so travellers can recognise priority buses without having to interpret the numbers on the front of the bus.

The investment in such a system is significantly less than for LRT or BRT. However, travel times would be longer, and they would increase as the road becomes more congested impacting reliability.

**Why wouldn’t you allow suburban buses to use the BRT network for greater efficiency?**

Signal priority is critical to the system being reliable now and into the future and achieving travel times competitive with a car trip. If suburban buses used the dedicated bus lanes too, signal priority couldn’t reliably be given to the suburban service buses which would impact the system efficiency.

**Why don’t you improve the bus network now and build a light rail system when there are more people to use it?**

It is likely that improvements to the existing bus network will be required over time until the mass transit system is delivered. Due to the long timeframe required to fund and construct a system such as LRT and BRT, once it is operational there will be more people living in the Sunshine Coast to use the system. As congestion grows over time, it will be more challenging to construct the system with greater delays and disruption to local travel.

**What about the trackless tram?**

“Trackless tram” is an emerging technology solution that resembles the Bus Rapid Transit reference project in form and function. A “trackless tram” is typically an electric powered rubber tyred vehicle that, in the future, could be autonomously guided via an optical or radio service guidance system. The best-known form of “trackless tram” is the Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART) which is currently operating on a 17km line that has recently been opened in the south-eastern part of Sichuan province in China.

These vehicles may offer an advantage in that they could potentially be longer than the maximum feasible length of a bus type vehicle, which is about 25 metres. However they would still need a busway, similar to the Bus Rapid Transit option discussed above to be fully effective. This would mean “trackless trams” would have a similar level of expense to BRT option.

Typically a business case considers only technologies and solutions that have a level of proven service, thereby reducing the technological and commissioning risks and enabling the government (and any operators) the ability to leverage off experience from similar systems globally. At this stage trackless trams do not have significant proven service experience that can be relied upon to reduce this risk for Council and its partners.
Its exclusion in the current business case phase does not prevent its future consideration in the Detailed Business Case or procurement phases if the technology becomes more advanced and a clear path to approval for its operation in Australia is established.

How much will travel on the mass transit cost?
The mass transit system would operate on the Translink go card network. The journey from Maroochydore to Birtinya is currently one zone (Zone 6). The current adult peak fare is $3.37, adult off peak is $2.70. The concession fares are $1.69 and $1.35 respectively.

Will mass transit be brought online in stages?
Yes. The Strategic Business Case completed in July 2019 recommends a staged approach to the implementation of a mass transit system, with the first stage proposed to link the city heart of Maroochydore to the town centre of Kawana via the coastal corridor through Mooloolaba and Birtinya. Future stages will include a connection to the North Coast Rail Line at Beerwah and in the long-term, a link to the Sunshine Coast international airport.

What is the timing for a mass transit system?
Developing a mass transit system is a long-term project. It requires ongoing commitment from all levels of government. The Strategic Business Case recommends a staging plan and sharing of responsibilities, with the lead role being taken by the Queensland Government. Council has a strong interest in the development of this new system for the region’s residents and will ensure the case for its delivery continues to be advanced.

Will bus services be changing?
All public transport services will continue to operate in accordance with published timetables. In the future, if a mass transit solution for the Sunshine Coast is implemented by the Queensland Government, then advice on any changes will be advertised in advance.

Is a mass transit system good use of taxpayer funds?
A mass transit solution for the Sunshine Coast is a valuable investment in the region’s liveability and environment. It will reduce pressure on governments to fund more roads and parking. It will reduce congestion costs to business and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with car use. Also, it will bring social benefits, enabling people to move around our region with a greater degree of ease and convenience.

Growth and urban transformation

What is urban consolidation and infill development?
Urban consolidation and infill development focuses development with the boundaries of pre-existing urban areas rather than expanding outwards (often referred to as urban sprawl). The consolidation of development within the most urbanised parts of the region combined with the delivery of a mass transit system means more people will use public transport, which in turn reduces pressure on the region’s green space and car dependency.

What is urban transformation/renewal?
Is the process undertaken to build on the strengths of each place by transforming under-used areas or where there is potential for improvement, boosting local economies and providing a mix of uses and activities to meet the needs of the community. It considers a balance of density, good design, a mix of land uses, location, improvements to public realm, housing choice and access to public transport to create a successful urban environment.

Why don’t you address the population growth instead of building more infrastructure?
Population growth is inevitable as more people will choose to move to the Sunshine Coast to enjoy everything it has to offer. Most people moving to the region are actually already Queenslanders, looking to change their way of life. Even if we could stop or cap growth, business activity would stall, and housing prices
would increase due to the laws of supply and demand. Without a sustainable plan for growth, we risk development occurring to meet demand which does not enhance our coastal lifestyle and environment in the long-term.

Sunshine Coast’s plan to manage growth builds on existing policy directions that have been reinforced through the SEQ Regional Plan and our commitment to the region shaping projects. Council has confirmed its position regarding the need for a coordinated approach to land use and transport planning to manage the region’s growth.

Why isn’t growth being located in new areas rather than the coastal corridor?

Responsible growth management requires housing in new areas as well as existing areas to ensure we do not have greater impact on our natural areas. We also need well located housing and employment opportunities in the locations served by quality transport services. Our future should be about convenient walkable communities that make the most of our enviable climate and relaxed lifestyle, to do this the Sunshine Coast must grow around sustainable mass transit, not freeways.

Growth brings with it exciting opportunities for a stronger economy, more jobs and greater liveability. It also creates some challenges around the protection of natural assets, character and lifestyle. We need to manage and direct growth in a way that maintains our community’s quality of life and protects and preserves our hinterland and natural landscapes by stopping development spread.

Why is council proposing to change the local area around mass transit stations?

It is important that while our local areas grow, we have good plans in place to protect the things that are important to us and enhance the areas which can provide better outcomes for the community. A mass transit system provides opportunities to position growth in locations that make it easier for our residents to access reliable transport in walking distance. Urban transformation will be focussed on existing centres and to areas close to the mass transit stations where there is potential for improvements rather than in existing high-quality residential areas.

The key focus of urban transformation will be the Maroochydore City Centre as the region’s central business district, Kawana town centre and Caloundra.

A carefully planned and progressive approach can transform older development and ‘boxy’ commercial buildings into modern, coastal lifestyle precincts rather than excessive high-rise development which would be inappropriate for the Sunshine Coast.

What will coastal lifestyle precincts look like?

The concept of the coastal lifestyle precinct aims to maintain and enhance the Sunshine Coast’s valued lifestyle, character and identity through:

- a series of urban villages containing a mix of uses which create local community hubs connected to the major centres of Maroochydore, Kawana and Caloundra
- providing for a range of desirable housing choices that suit our coastal lifestyle and provide affordable options for our community – not only single house dwellings or apartment blocks, but options in between such as townhouses
- achieving a built environment that contains building height and site cover that is consistent with the Sunshine Coast’s existing character and environment and prevents excessive high-rise development.

Community consultation

What community consultation has been undertaken to date?

Consultation on mass transit and urban transformation proposals has been a feature of all relevant council consultation and strategy work since 2012 and council will continue to work closely with the community as the projects progress. Refer to Figure 2 below.
How can the community have their say?
Council is committed to engaging the community throughout this planning process to build on the many years of planning and consultation to date. Council will be delivering a comprehensive consultation program in 2021 to seek community and stakeholder feedback and ideas on the options for the SCMT project as well as options for managing growth within the urban coastal corridor.

We encourage you to register for project updates to have your say. Register on our website at:

There will also be future opportunities for the community to have their say, including through the development of the Detailed Business Case which will be led by the Queensland Government in partnership with council.

Any land use changes in the urban corridor will also be subject to statutory consultation if they require changes to the planning scheme.

Will the community have a say on any changes to the planning scheme?
If as a result of the consultation undertaken through the Detailed Business Case analysis, if it is considered that amendments to the planning scheme are required, they will be subject to further community consultation in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Planning Act.

Business case and future planning

Why is council building the case?
While responsibility for the public transport network lies with the Queensland Government, council is aware that public transport will play a vital role in shaping the future of our region and so considers it appropriate to take a role in the planning work for a preferred public transport solution.

How is council building the case?
Council is following a three-step process as required by the Queensland Government.

**Step 1:** Preparation of a Strategic Business Case – endorsed by council late July 2019.

**Step 2:** Preparation of an Options Analysis – expected by mid 2021.

(Stages 1 and 2 identify the problem, investigate the strategic need and assess the possible solutions, for instance, light rail and bus rapid transport options.)

**Step 3:** In partnership with the Queensland Government, the preparation of a Detailed Business Case – expected by 2021/22

(The Queensland Government has committed $7.5 million to Step 3.)

Is the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit the same project as the one we heard about in the early 2000’s?
In 2001, the Queensland Government Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) completed a study called the Caboolture to Maroochydore Corridor Study – also known as CAMCOS. The route is shown in red on the map below. More information about this project is available on TMR’s website here:

This study focussed in part on providing higher speed travel to the south of the region including to Brisbane. The study concluded the preferred transport mode was heavy passenger rail, similar to the current Citytrain network, and identified a preferred corridor from Beerwah to the Sunshine Coast Airport which has been protected since. The corridor runs from Beerwah, south of Baringa, west of Pelican Waters, through Aroona, west of Kawana Way, and along the Sunshine Motorway to the Sunshine Coast Airport, with a short spur east of Maroochy Boulevard to the Maroochydore City Centre.

However, the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Project (SCMT) noted that the majority of trips in the Sunshine Coast are local and under 10km in
length which requires a local mass transit system as an urgent priority for the region. The route for the local mass transit system is shown on the map below in blue.

The Options Analysis phase of the business case process includes investigating options to provide for local movement in the northern part of the blue route – between Maroochydore and the Sunshine Coast University Hospital – along roads such as the Nicklin Way, Brisbane Road, Alexandra Parade and Aerodrome Road. Refer to Figure 1 below.

What were the findings of the Strategic Business Case?
The business case demonstrates the need for a high quality integrated public transport system providing frequent and reliable services. It also supports urban consolidation as a means of reducing development sprawl and protecting environmental values across the region. It found that 74 per cent of all trips on the Sunshine Coast are local and under 10 kilometres in length. An integrated mass transit system within the most urbanised parts of the Coast would cater for many of these trips.

What is a Detailed Business Case?
A Detailed Business Case is developed under the Queensland Government’s Value for Money Framework and informs the government about a project’s procurement, social and environmental impacts, as well as financial and budget implications, allowing it to decide on whether to proceed with a project.

Will the Sunshine Coast Council be delivering the Mass Transit Project?
No. Public transport in Queensland is the responsibility of the Queensland Government. Council has been progressing the initial phases of the business case in its role as the authority responsible for the future urban settlement pattern and lifestyle and economic development of the region. Given transport systems shape cities and influence lifestyles and economies, everyone has a responsibility to develop ideas and solutions for the future of transport in the region.

The Queensland Government has agreed to progress the next phase of the business case, the Detailed Business Case, in the future.

If the business case is endorsed, does that mean the assumptions made for the population modelling will be implemented?
As part of a business case development, you have to consider the future potential demand of the project as well as its potential benefits to ensure an investment of that scale is worthwhile. This requires assumptions on what the project will achieve over the long-term for the surrounding local area including new residential and economic offerings. If the project is funded and delivered it is important that these benefits are realised but there is flexibility in how they are achieved. This will require a land use plan that enables the desired benefits and any land use changes would be led by council in consultation with the community. The market will then determine the pace of this change which is likely to happen over several decades.

If council endorses that SCMT Options Analysis, does that mean the land use changes are approved?
Any endorsement of the Options Analysis does not endorse any changes to the land use in the current planning scheme.

The urban land use planning undertaken so far is indicative, to study what is possible if a mass transit system is built. It is not a detailed town planning proposal.

Consistent with the rest of the detail on a mass transit project, the detail of urban transformation (including discussion about built form and height) will be developed with community input over the next few years.

Will more council funding be required to cover the capital cost of delivering the project?
This will be a matter for Council to decide at that time. Some other local governments, most notably the City of Gold Coast, have voluntarily
offered to provide a proportion of capital funding to help get important public transport projects off the ground. This successful strategy could be a model for the Sunshine Coast Council to consider.

Will a public private partnership be considered?
A public private partnership is a procurement model designed to maximise value for money to Government by allocating risk to the party best placed to deal with that risk. It is one of many procurement models which may be considered for a project of this scale. The model chosen for procurement of any future mass transit system will be determined at the appropriate time by the state and federal government.

How does mass transit relate to the Mooloolaba to Maroochydore (M2M) Cycleway project?
Both the M2M and Mass Transit Projects are in preliminary stages of design development. On 11 August 2020, Transport and Main Roads postponed work on stage six of the M2M project to develop a new community-focused design.

Coordination between these two important projects as they enter more detailed planning and design will remain essential.

What about coastal issues such as sea level rise and coastal erosion risks?
The SCMT Options Analysis work will include an Environmental Assessment as required by Building Queensland’s Business Case Development Framework. Among other policies, strategies and plans, the Environmental Assessment considered Council’s Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy, the Shoreline Erosion Management Plan, and available flooding and drainage information. It identified key risks and made a number of recommendations for further investigations.

The final part of the business case process - the Detailed Business Case - will conduct rigorous investigation of these issues. The Detailed Business Case will investigate model flooding and drainage in the vicinity of the proposed new infrastructure. The reference design for the Detailed Business Case will include any infrastructure necessary to protect new infrastructure from coastal impacts.

Detailed design considerations

Is council in control of the detailed design?
No. Council has undertaken only preliminary engineering to test feasibility and allow high level cost estimates. The detailed engineering design will be undertaken by the Department of Transport and Main Roads who control most of the roads and are responsible for delivering public transport projects.

What are the impacts on local properties and businesses?
We are currently building the business case for mass transit, which has to go through a number of processes prior to achieving any government funding commitment. Therefore, at this stage, no property owners or businesses are affected. As the project progresses to the Detailed Business Case phase in 2021-22, council and the Queensland Government will continue to engage with the community and stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

Are park and ride stations included in the planning?
A park and ride car parking facility in the vicinity of the intersection of Brisbane Road and the Sunshine Motorway would provide benefits to the broader Sunshine Coast community. A park and ride in this location could be ideal for Sunshine Coast residents to travel to the coastal corridor via the Sunshine Motorway, then complete their journey on the mass transit system. Other park and ride opportunities will also be investigated to create greater opportunities for our hinterland residents to access the mass transit system.

A similar example of this is the large and well utilised park and ride facility at the Parkwood Station on the Gold Coast light rail system. It is easily accessed from the Pacific Motorway, and
provides a convenient mass transit connection to the Southport CBD, and the coastal precincts.

**Will the mass transit project need to acquire properties to fit in to the road corridor?**
This matter will be dealt with in more detail during the consultation that will occur as part of the Detailed Business Case which will be led by the Queensland Government.

The impacts on adjoining properties would be similar to those if the road was widened to provide two extra traffic lanes. In some cases, the Queensland Government may be faced with a choice: either narrow the road to eliminate traffic lanes or acquire additional land to maintain reasonable flows of traffic.

Typically every effort is made to minimise requirements to acquire properties. Many properties potentially affected are also commercial or industrial uses, not residential uses.

If any additional properties that are potentially affected by the detailed design, the owners and occupiers will be notified by the Queensland Government through their approved planning and consultation process.

**Will the mass transit project result in the loss of on-street car parking?**
This matter will be dealt with in more detail during the consultation that will occur as part of the Detailed Business Case which will be led by the Queensland Government.

The impacts on parking would be similar to those if the road was widened to provide two extra traffic lanes. In some cases, the Queensland Government may be faced with a choice: either relocate existing on-street kerbside parking or widen the road by acquiring additional land to allow the parking spaces to be retained. Acquisition of land to retain parking is usually pointless because those property owners who may desire to use the parking would have sold their land to the government and moved on.

Typically however, consideration can be given to relocating parking where possible, with a view to the project achieving no net loss of public car parking.

**Will the mass transit impact on visual appeal, particularly along Alexandra Headland, with additional overhead wires, poles and concrete?**
While no final decision has been made on the technology to be used, the two technologies that best meet the project objectives - light rail and bus rapid transit - use modern electric powered vehicles with low noise and amenity impacts, designed to enhance the urban realm, not harm it.

Recent advances in on-board energy storage suggest that the vehicles could run wire free for at least part of the route, and the high visual amenity sections would be the first considered for wire free running.

Newcastle light rail is a fully wire free system – though the route is only 2.5km long with no steep climbs.

Canberra has also been considering wire free light rail for extensions to its system into the parliamentary precincts.

Another possibility to improve amenity in the case of light rail is grass track. Some sections of the Adelaide system have low maintenance grass between the rails instead of concrete. There are a number of overseas examples of grass track too. There are areas of high visual amenity along the Sunshine Mass Transit route that could be considered for a high amenity finish such as grass track subject to maintenance agreements.

**Are these systems noisy?**
The electric motors are much quieter than existing diesel bus motors. Rail systems sometimes suffer from 'wheel squeal' at bends in the track but this can be managed by maintenance. The Gold Coast system had some initial wheel squeal concerns which have now been resolved.

Figure 1 Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Concept Master Plan