Sunshine Coast Mass Transit

Being able to get around the Sunshine Coast easily and conveniently as we continue to grow will be an important part of maintaining our way of life and promoting a sustainable future for the generations to come.

Sunshine Coast Council is planning for that future by exploring the options to provide a mass transit system in a draft Options Analysis report.
Mass transit is a convenient and easy-to-access public transport system which moves people efficiently.

A well-designed mass transit system reduces car usage, especially at peak times. Such a system could utilise:

- Buses, including articulated and double decker buses
- Trackless trams or light rail vehicles
- Passenger trains.

Some facts about the planning for a mass transit system for the Sunshine Coast

In February 2021, Council adopted its Corporate Plan for 2021 to 2025. The Corporate Plan identifies the need to plan for growth in a sustainable way including progressing the preparation of a business case for Sunshine Coast Mass Transit.

The draft Options Analysis is the second of the three phases of the business case process. The third and final phase of the process – the Detailed Business Case – would be undertaken by the State Government and provide the basis for seeking State and Commonwealth funding to enable the delivery of a mass transit system.

- We want to reduce carbon emissions from private car use
- We want to address congestion
- We know that we can’t continue having 85% of all trips being made by car
- We also know that 81% of Sunshine Coast residents want better public transport
- We are planning to maintain good access for everyone, regardless of income, age and ability, to our centres, places of employment, essential facilities and unique attractions such as our beaches and hinterland
- We are considering a mass transit system as part of an integrated transport strategy for the Sunshine Coast
- We will promote the principles of Sunshine Coast Design and a form and scale of development that is sympathetic to its surroundings
- We will continue to advocate for a regional passenger rail link to be provided in the CAMCOS corridor to connect Maroochydore City Centre to Brisbane CBD, recognising that a separate mass transit system is needed to service the coastal corridor from Maroochydore to Caloundra, which accommodates the greatest concentration of population, jobs, facilities and services on the Sunshine Coast.
Why is a mass transit system needed?

The Sunshine Coast’s population is forecast to grow from 320,000 in 2019 to more than 518,000 in 2041.

That means around 200,000 more people are expected to call the Sunshine Coast home over in the next 20 years.

As has been observed for decades and as the State’s and Council’s planning continues to propose, a significant proportion of the region’s employment and population growth will occur in the coastal corridor between Maroochydore and Caloundra.

To service that growth in a sustainable way, a better transport system is needed to connect people to the employment, shopping, healthcare, education, recreation and entertainment opportunities in that corridor.

Aspects of this better transport system could be enabled by improving parts of the road network, but the need can only be fully satisfied by providing an alternative: a mass transit service that is frequent, convenient, accessible, reliable, comfortable, rapid and good value.

With the continuing emergence of new technologies, there is a wider and more viable range of mass transit options than ever before.

The draft Options Analysis report explores each of these options, alongside the options to make more basic improvements to the transport system. It recommends which options provide a suitable means of addressing our transport needs and should therefore be the subject of more detailed consideration in the next phase of the business case process.

The draft Options Analysis report also reminds us of the conclusions of the first phase of our business case process – the Strategic Business Case. This initial phase proposed an overall mass transit system for the entire Sunshine Coast, comprising:

- the existing railway from Beerwah to Nambour
- a new regional rail in the CAMCOS corridor
- a new local mass transit system in the coastal corridor
- a high frequency bus network
- supporting feeder buses to those areas beyond the walk up catchment
- an improved pathway network to facilitate walking, bicycle and other micro-mobility access to the system.

The Strategic Business Case concluded that local mass transit in the northern part of the coastal corridor is the highest priority because this area contains the greatest concentration of population, jobs, facilities and services and is already experiencing growing traffic congestion.
Only a few years ago, light rail transit was arguably the mass transit technology that most commonly provided the standard of service required of a good public transport system. Although light rail transit is still an option when considering the type of service we need here on the Sunshine Coast, other technologies have emerged in recent times that offer a similar standard of service and are therefore included in the list of options evaluated in the draft Options Analysis.

The options under consideration range from continuing with the current approach to delivering the transport system (i.e. ‘business as usual’), to undertaking some basic and incremental improvements to public transport operations and services, right up to a high quality mass transit system with a dedicated running way and signal priority.

It is important to know that the draft Options Analysis does not settle on any one option to take forward to the Detailed Business Case phase. Instead, the draft Options Analysis suggests that a variety of different types of mass transit could provide the standard of service needed.

We are seeking your feedback about all the options under consideration:

**Business as usual**
Region-wide incremental upgrades to roads, parking and buses reflecting current patterns of investment, which have, to date, tended to lag behind the growth of the region.

**Region-wide bus service enhancements**
New and existing routes with greater frequency, more direct routes and better connections. This option does not include new infrastructure or roads. **One bus replaces about 55 cars.**

**Road network upgrades**
Road upgrades in the coastal corridor for the benefit of all traffic, including buses.
Quality bus corridor
A high-frequency bus service running in dedicated kerbside bus priority lanes with features such as high-quality vehicles, pre-paid boarding and good quality bus stops and shelters.
One bus replaces about 95 cars.

Bus Rapid Transit
25 metre-long battery-powered, rubber tyred buses running at high frequency in a dedicated busway corridor mostly in the centre of the road with high-quality stations, pre-paid boarding and priority signalling.
One bus rapid transit vehicle replaces about 110 cars.

Region-wide bus network upgrades supported by better infrastructure
Region-wide bus system upgrades supported by better infrastructure such as improved shelters, sections of bus priority lanes and park ‘n’ ride facilities.
One bus replaces about 55 cars.

Trackless tram
32 metre-long battery-powered, rubber tyred ‘tram-like’ vehicles running at high frequency in a dedicated busway corridor. There are no overhead lines and no track.
One trackless tram replaces about 170 cars.

Light Rail Transit
45 metre-long modern rail vehicles running at high frequency on a dedicated track mostly in the centre of the road with high-quality stations, pre-paid boarding and priority signalling. There are overhead wires the most proven and reliable electrification technology.
One light rail transit vehicle replaces about 250 cars.

Wireless Light Rail Transit
Identical to the light rail transit vehicle, but operating without the need for overhead wires, using on-board batteries and charging equipment at some stations.
One wire-free light rail transit vehicle replaces about 250 cars.
Our coastal corridor is continuing to change

The coastal corridor will continue to grow and change, with or without a mass transit system.

A responsible plan must provide sustainable transport options that deliver an alternative to the endless and inevitably futile pursuit of building more and bigger roads to solve traffic congestion.

We must plan for growth to ensure we maintain our quality of life and protect our beaches, hinterland and natural landscapes. The revitalisation of Maroochydore, Mooloolaba, Kawana and Caloundra centres are part of this plan, providing more jobs, attracting investment, offering more diverse housing choices and enabling more sustainable growth into the future.

The coastal corridor between Maroochydore and Caloundra has been an area of strategic focus for Council and the state government for many years. The delivery of significant projects in the corridor, such as the Maroochydore City Centre, presents a range of economic, planning and sustainable transport opportunities.

SUNSHINE COAST UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL
The tertiary, teaching hospital is set to grow to around 738 beds in 2021. Currently the hospital employs more than 6000 people which will grow as the capacity increases.

SUNSHINE COAST STADIUM
Premier sporting and entertainment facility which is expected to be expanded to accommodate a seating capacity of about 23,400 over time.

CALOUNDRA CENTRE MASTER PLAN
The Caloundra Centre Master Plan will see it emerge as a new investment and business district. Changes to the planning scheme have made it ‘transit ready’ for high frequency public transport.

COASTAL CORRIDOR
The coastal corridor between Maroochydore and Caloundra has been an area of strategic focus for Council and the state government for many years. The delivery of significant projects in the corridor, such as the Maroochydore City Centre, presents a range of economic, planning and sustainable transport opportunities.
Our plan to manage the future of the Sunshine Coast

Sunshine Coast Council is responsible for planning the region’s future and managing growth in a sustainable way in accordance with the directions of ShapingSEQ (the Regional Plan for South East Queensland), taking account of the forecasts for population growth produced by the State Government.

The Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 sets down Council’s current approach to growth management and presents a clear strategic plan for protecting the character, lifestyle and environment of the Sunshine Coast as it grows.

The new planning scheme, which is intended to be in place by 2024, will build on the foundations of the current scheme, but provide a fresh direction for the planning and development of the Sunshine Coast to the mid-2040s with the aim of furthering Council’s vision as Australia’s most sustainable region. Healthy. Smart. Creative.

**Stage 1 Local Mass Transit Route**
The first stage of the mass transit route is considered in the Options Analysis which is in preparation. This would serve the busiest areas of the corridor.

**Maroochydore City Centre**
Maroochydore City Centre is a priority development area that aims to transform the centre into an area for commerce, technology, innovation, entertainment and inner-city living.

**Sunshine Coast Airport**
The new runway delivered in June 2020 will support an increase in people travelling for business and leisure, and create new opportunities for business, exports and tourism – generating 2200 jobs by 2040.

**Mass Transit Catchment**
This is the approximate distance (800m) or time (10mins) people are willing to walk to reach a transit access point.
Local planning opportunities

A mass transit system can also help us achieve great local planning outcomes as we grow. More people on a high-quality public transport service presents the opportunity to renew and revitalise local areas close to the transit stops or stations. This renewal and revitalisation can come in the form of:

- urban villages that provide vibrant local community hubs
- activities clustered around places of heightened connectivity and convenience
- a greater range of housing choices offering more affordable opportunities to enjoy what the coastal has to offer.

Sunshine Coast Mass Transit would be a region-changing project.

With this type of investment comes the opportunity to deliver greater benefits for our community, including:

- More walkable local neighbourhoods
- Better connections to our green spaces
- A stronger sense of local villages that provide a focus for the community
- Renewed precincts around the local mass transit stations potentially providing a wider choice of local retailing and dining opportunities
- More easily accessible jobs, services and facilities
- Well-designed buildings that make the most of our climate, outdoor lifestyle and local character
- A healthier night-time economy made possible by convenient travel choices into the evening.

We would like your feedback, views and ideas about the different mass transit options and the different ways in which the coastal corridor could grow and change while preserving and promoting its attraction, its character and our lifestyles.

Your feedback, views and ideas will be incorporated in the finalised Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Options Analysis before it is considered by Council in late 2021.

Help decide for today and tomorrow. Use the QR code below to take our survey or visit Council’s website at sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au to see where you can talk with us.