

31 January 2013

To Whom it May Concern

Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport: Draft Report
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To Whom it May Concern,

RE: SUBMISSION ON DRAFT REPORT ON WALKING, RIDING AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers (RDA – Northern Rivers) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the *Draft Report for Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport*.

Our organisation is a non-profit community-based and regionally focused organisation that connects people and businesses in our region to opportunities through partnerships focusing on community, environment and economy.

RDA – Northern Rivers acknowledges that any planning and investment to increase alternatives to private car transport is critical in regional Australia as transport options are limited in the regions. The benefits include decreasing transport costs and greenhouse gas emissions, and improved health outcomes for regional communities.

In the Northern Rivers region of NSW, the Sustain Northern Rivers Commuter Mapping Project has surveyed the region's councils, health department, TAFE and University staff regarding their patterns of commuting to and from work. The survey identified support for the following incentives:

- increasing the availability and frequency of bus routes and discounted season tickets would increase the patronage of public transport;
- safe walking route information, appropriate facilities at work and a peer to walk with would increase walking to work; and
- improvements to cycle lanes, end-of-journey facilities (i.e. showers or lockers) and secure bike storage at work places would increase cycling to work.



An Australian Government Initiative



A NSW Government Initiative

Increasing active transport in major activity centres requires:

- network and infrastructure planning to be based on safe travel routes;
- planning to be implemented through investment in appropriate walk or cycleways and supporting infrastructure (i.e. information, bike storage, showering facilities, training etc);
- making alternatives to car transport quicker, more convenient and pleasant; and
- disincentives for cars such as no parking, parking fees, closed streets and one way streets etc.

There are many plans, policies and strategies to outline best practice in active transport in place. However, investment to implement these plans and put the infrastructure in place is critically needed. Programs such as the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage's Austcycle vouchers to provide safe cycle training are a critical part of the infrastructure required to develop the skills and knowledge to participate in active transport. Other countries have examples of active transport uptake using shared space and community development principles to make active transport the preferred option. Other initiatives that could be considered include reducing speed limits, prioritising bicycle parking spaces and providing right of way to cyclists and pedestrians.

The provision of public transport on an equitable cost ratio to metropolitan centres is critical in regional Australia. In the Northern Rivers, bus services are predominantly limited to school bus services only and there is inadequate data on transport demand and need to plan new or responsive public transport services. A survey is currently being undertaken to determine levels of unmet transport demand that may be able to inform future service planning and delivery. Data and information of the needs of residents for public transport and active transport options is critical to inform planning and investment.

CONCLUSION

RDA – Northern Rivers appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the Draft Report. Please do not hesitate to contact me on 02 6622 4011 should you require any additional information.

Yours sincerely,



Katrina Luckie

CEO