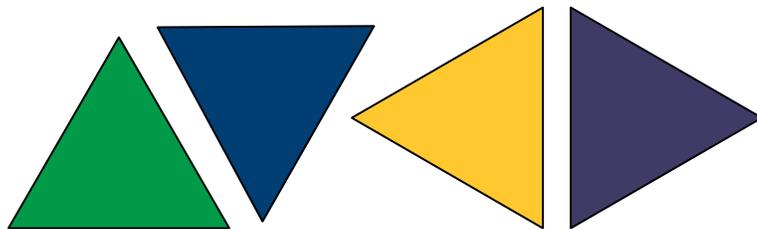


SOUTHERN COUNCILS GROUP SUBMISSION

Legislative Assembly inquiry conducted by the State and Regional Development Committee.

May 2012



Inter-regional Public Transport (Inquiry)



Prepared by:

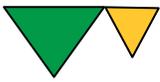
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BACKGROUND

About Southern Councils Group

The Southern Councils Group (SCG) is the peak organisation representing Local Government in the Illawarra and South Coast regions.

Member Councils include Bega Valley Shire, Eurobodalla Shire, Kiama Municipal, Shellharbour City, Shoalhaven City, Wingecarribee Shire and Wollongong City Councils.

SCG Region

Southern Councils Group extends across the Illawarra and South East of NSW. The Illawarra region begins just south of Sydney covering 8,485 square kilometres stretching from Helensburgh in the north to Durras Waters 228 kilometres to the south and centres of Bowral, Moss Vale and Mittagong to the west, and is bounded by the ocean to the east. The South Coast region stretches from Durras in the north to the Victorian border in the south and is bounded by the Great Dividing Range to the west and the Tasman Sea to the east, covering 9702 square kilometres.

The residential population of half a million can double, and up to treble, in coastal locations during the summer months from the October long weekend to Easter. Transport issues continue to feature highly in all SCG member Council public consultations. Ageing demographics combined with poor public transport have created social isolation for many residents in coastal and highland villages and towns, and difficulty of access to medical services; while young people across the whole region have poor access to educational, employment and recreational services.



Inquiry Terms of Reference

That the Committee inquire into how inter-regional public transport can better serve the needs of regional New South Wales.

(a) How CountryLink services can be improved;

The SCG region is poorly serviced by CountryLink services. There are no coastal CountryLink train services. Two east-west CountryLink coach services operate, one from Eden to the ACT and one from Wollongong to the Southern Highlands.

- ▶ Recognise and provide service improvements for the 'missing link' in the CountryLink-rail-coach network, i.e. the link from Wollongong to Eden and connections to the ACT and points along the Hume Highway and the Southern Sydney to Melbourne rail corridor.
- ▶ Complete the electrification of the South Coast rail line to Bomaderry.
- ▶ Resolve long-term planning provisions for extension of the South Coast rail line beyond the Shoalhaven River to (at least) the major Nowra CBD interchange. This review should be undertaken in conjunction with the review of the Shoalhaven road bridge crossings.

Suggestions for improving CountryLink services include:

- ▶ Faster travel speeds to entice more people to use CountryLink services.
- ▶ Upgrading of the Princes Highway to allow fast CountryLink coach services to be deployed.
- ▶ Upgrading of the East-West link roads to allow faster existing CountryLink coach services, and fast new services on, for example, the Kings Highway.
- ▶ Provision of better deals for travellers where multiple fares may be required.

(b) How network linkages between CountryLink train and coach services can be improved;

- ▶ Improved interstate bus pickup/set-down areas with good local intermodal connections.

(c) The potential for CountryLink services to carry light freight;

- ▶ There may be some potential. In the absence of any CountryLink rail services other than those on the main Sydney Canberra line, the potential is hard to explore. Coach Services would have little or no current capacity.

(d) How CountryLink can be better utilised to increase tourism in New South Wales;

- ▶ High tourism visitation is a welcome addition to the economy of the SCG region but in the absence of any other form of transport in the majority of the region, the increases in vehicular movements (both passenger and freight), place further strain on the existing road corridors.
- ▶ Increased regular, affordable, accessible road-based passenger services would alleviate some of the competition between freight and passenger traffic.

- ▶ Options to better utilise CountryLink services to increase tourism include the provision of fares integrated with car hire, accommodation or car parking, to provide enticing travel package deals

(e) How the amount of inter-regional travel undertaken by public transport can be increased;

The most obvious way to increase inter-regional travel patronage by public transport in the SCG region would be **to provide the public transport**.

- ▶ The region already has a much higher than State average of the over 50's demographic; and for much of the south coast of NSW over 50% of the population is already above 65 years of age. As a retirement demographic, the potential for patronage is already high and growing.
- ▶ Young people consistently cite transport as an issue, with access to education, recreation and jobs severely curtailed by poor public transport to major centres.

Much of the retirement population is from the ACT and "Visiting Friends and Relatives" travel, access to education and employment opportunities, and some travel for medical purposes could potentially be met by good east-west public transport services.

(f) The extent to which regional public transport networks are integrated and how they can be better integrated;

- ▶ Currently poor.
- ▶ Integrate the public inter-regional services with the private local commuting bus system and the private long haul coach operators.
- ▶ Integrate public transport with existing community transport services.

(g) The role local councils can play in improving inter-regional public transportation networks;

- ▶ Collaboration and engagement between State and local government in public consultations to avoid duplication of effort and community over-consultation.
- ▶ Good planning and design for safety, accessibility, etc e.g. allow for a variety of complementary land uses around public transport nodes to enable multi-trip purposes; ensuring active street frontages are included on the ground floor of new or redeveloped buildings and spaces; and reflect the Premier's Council for Active Living guidelines for 'Designing Places for Active Living'.
- ▶ Cooperative focus on the design, development and maintenance of the interface infrastructure.

(h) The type of buses and trains that will be required for the provision of regional passenger services in the future.

- ▶ It should be recognised that much of the patronage growth will necessarily be from an ageing demographic with both increased expectations and needs; this may require a rethink of the accessibility and comfort design of buses and trains, luggage and storage space (e.g. mobility devices and bikes) and the need to incorporate more entertainment, on-board information and refreshment services, and interactivity with trip updates, on-board booking services etc.