

Submission to the Draft South East and Tablelands Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan

General Comments

Destination Southern NSW welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the **Draft South East and Tablelands Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan**. We commend Transport for NSW for recognizing the importance of an integrated transport network and its role in supporting regional communities, industries, and visitors. Our submission highlights key areas of concern and opportunity for the tourism sector, which plays a vital role in the regional economy.

Specific Observations and Recommendations

1. Table 1 – Strategic Alignment

We recommend that **VES2030 (Visitor Economy Strategy 2030)** and the **Southern NSW Destination Management Plan (DMP)** be explicitly referenced to align with broader economic and tourism priorities in the region.

2. Rail Connectivity & Public Transport

- **Improving the speed and frequency of the ACT-Sydney rail link** should be a **high priority**. A faster and more frequent connection would enhance regional accessibility, support economic growth, and provide an alternative to road travel. The ACT Government and VisitCanberra have highlighted this as a high priority project.
- The **replacement of train services with coach services reduces accessibility** for visitors and locals alike. During **Floriade 2024**, rail services were replaced with bus transport due to track work. This resulted in a formal complaint by a group of seniors who were unable to attend the event.
- The impact of the **Western Sydney International Airport (WSI)** on **Canberra Airport** should be considered. WSI's opening may shift aviation travel patterns, impacting domestic and international visitor movements to and from the South East and Tablelands region.

3. Road Safety & Traffic Management

- Temporary **speed reductions during major festivals** should be considered. For example, during the **Young Cherry Festival**, reducing the **Olympic Highway speed limit from 100km/h to 80km/h** would enhance visitor and community safety.
- We support **Section 5.5.1 – Meeting the transport needs of visitors to the region**, which acknowledges tourism's importance. However, further recognition of the sector's economic significance is required. **Tourism employs 4% of Australia's workforce but 8.7% in the Destination Southern NSW region**, making it a significant engine industry.

- **Snow traffic, National Parks access, and real-time traffic management** are well recognized in the Draft Plan. We support the **deployment of real-time technology, smart signage, and mobile applications** for traffic and parking management, particularly in high-volume areas such as ski fields and national parks.

4. Sustainable Transport & EV Infrastructure

- **Section 5.7** correctly identifies the importance of expanding the **EV charging network**. This aligns with **Destination NSW's current work plan**, and we strongly support further investment in regional EV infrastructure to enhance visitor accessibility. The ACT has the nation's highest uptake of EV's and are a key market for the region.

5. Rail Trails as Key Tourism Infrastructure

- **Access to rail corridors for Rail Trails** should be explicitly recognized. Rail trails are a **key tourism asset**, yet they are **not classified as 'active transport'** under current frameworks. Inclusion of rail trails as vital tourism and recreational infrastructure will enhance opportunities for economic growth and regional connectivity.

6. Workforce Mobility & Housing Challenges

- The **ability of tourism staff to access workplaces** is increasingly constrained by **housing shortages**. Many workers are forced to live outside the region, creating transport barriers. Strategies should consider improved public transport options to support workforce mobility.

7. Port of Eden

- As the report notes, the Port of Eden is a key piece of infrastructure. Cruise tourism is growing rapidly and makes a significant contribution to the regional visitor economy ¹. The role of Cruise Eden, including that of Cruise Coordinator, is critical to ensure operators and visitors enjoy a positive shoreside experience.

8. Redundancy & Disaster Resilience

- **Section 5.6.1 – Redundancies** rightly emphasizes the importance of resilience planning. **Tourism is dramatically impacted by the closure of key access roads to the coast**, particularly the King's Highway (Clyde Mountain) and Snowy Mountain Highway (Brown Mountain). These roads are essential for visitor access, and their closures have severe economic repercussions for coastal communities.

Conclusion

Destination Southern NSW supports the strategic direction outlined in the Draft Plan but urges greater emphasis on tourism's role in the regional economy. Addressing transport infrastructure gaps, enhancing rail and road connectivity, and ensuring redundancy planning for major transport routes will be critical to sustaining tourism growth and regional economic resilience.

¹ <https://dsnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Regional-NSW-Cruise-Industry-Development-Project-Business-Case-1.pdf>

We welcome further engagement with Transport for NSW to ensure that the final plan fully integrates the needs of the visitor economy.



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