



Tasmanian Road Project Fast Tracking

RACT Submission to Department of State Growth

April 2020

The Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania

RACT enjoys a trusted position and extensive market penetration in the community. More than 200,000 Tasmanians are RACT members.

Formed in 1923, RACT is an apolitical and independent transport, infrastructure, road safety, tourism and mobility advocate.

It is committed to supporting and furthering the interests of Tasmanians and does this through a comprehensive program of consultation, education, awareness and public advocacy.

RACT is represented in a number of stakeholder reference organisations in Tasmania and undertakes liaison with government and other groups. It also has three regional advocacy committees which are made up of local volunteers and other relevant stakeholders.

RACT's advocacy activity is defined by a series of public policy documents developed and endorsed by RACT's Advocacy Committee and Board.

These policies have been informed by history, experience, statistical analysis, consultation, industry knowledge and, most importantly, our members.

Nationally, RACT is a constituent member of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) which represents some 8 million Australian motorists.

Internationally, RACT has joined with other Australian motoring organisations as a member of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) to work on road safety and related issues at a global level.

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RACT's Mobility Strategy

The RACT Mobility Strategy contains three key pillars, which include road safety, future mobility and sustainability, with an underlying theme of representing Tasmanian road users. Within each key pillar sits RACT's vision statements. The statements most applicable to the fast tracking of Tasmanian road projects is:

Road safety vision

- Reduce congestion on Tasmanian roads.
- Improve Tasmanian roads so that they are rated no less than three stars under the AusRAP scheme by 2030.

Background

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on communities throughout Tasmania and RACT is supportive of rescheduling some key road infrastructure projects. Lower traffic flows in many parts of the state create opportunities to reduce work related disruptions, while some projects can be used as levers for economic stimulus.

The Tasmanian Government is fast tracking a series of road infrastructure projects due to the COVID-19 crisis, to take advantage of the current opportunity and soften some of the negative impacts caused by the virus.

RACT believes projects that would be most suitable for fast tracking must satisfy all or some of the following criteria:

- Projects that improve congestion and/or improve road safety outcomes.
- Projects that improve or create economic opportunities.
- Projects that are fully or nearly planned for and soon to commence.

This document outlines the projects RACT considers to be the primary candidates for consideration spread across the southern, northern and north-west regions.

Southern Projects

Hobart Airport Interchange

Project description

Due to increasing traffic congestion on the Tasman Highway between Sorell and Hobart, the Tasmanian and Australian governments have committed \$50 million to construct a four-lane interchange that will replace the Hobart Airport roundabout.

Rapid growth in the residential areas of Sorell and the southern beaches as well as an increase in airport traffic and tourism numbers along the East Coast and Tasman Peninsula, has contributed to more traffic throughout the area.

As a result, the existing roundabout is currently operating at capacity, with delays and queuing often occurring during peak times.

The new interchange is intended to improve travel time reliability and traffic flow along the Tasman Highway, as well as access to the Hobart Airport, Cambridge, Seven Mile Beach and the Hobart Airport precinct.

An initial concept design for the interchange has been created to facilitate the predicted growth in traffic, including increases in visitor numbers, air freight transport, and commercial developments. The concept design includes:

- Reconstruction and upgrading of 1.6km of the Tasman Highway including extension of the dual carriageway.
- A four-lane overpass, with the realigned Holyman Avenue and Kennedy Drive passing over the Tasman Highway.
- Removal of the roundabout from the Tasman Highway.
- A two lane off-ramp to the Hobart Airport.
- A continuous flow on-ramp from the airport towards Hobart that will allow for future increases of airport traffic.
- Traffic lights to coordinate vehicles across the overpass. The traffic lights will be responsive to the volume of traffic.

Fast track justification

Construction is expected to commence in mid-2020 but RACT believes the Tasmanian Government should consider fast tracking the Hobart Airport interchange project for the following reasons:

1. There are fewer vehicle movements and therefore less congestion on this section of the Tasman Highway as a result of COVID-19, both in terms of local traffic and vehicles travelling to the airport in light of movement restrictions.

Fast tracking this project will therefore be less disruptive to traffic in the short term, particularly if movement restrictions are eased only gradually over the coming months. While it is understood the construction of this project could take as long as two years, any opportunity to conduct works while traffic flow is lower should be pursued.

2. Planning for the airport interchange project is well-advanced, with work expected to commence in mid-2020.

Public Transport Improvements

Huntingfield Park and Ride

Project description

Traffic between the Kingborough area and Hobart is increasing. This is putting pressure on the Southern Outlet as well as Macquarie and Davey streets during the morning and afternoon peaks.

As part of the Channel Highway Kingston to Margate Corridor Study, the Department of State Growth is working on the development of a park and ride facility at Huntingfield.

The Huntingfield park and ride project aims to help incentivise bus use for those commuting between the Kingborough area and Hobart, thus reducing congestion on the Southern Outlet, as well as Macquarie and Davey streets.

The project involves the full reconstruction of the current park and ride site adjacent to the Algona Road roundabout, including improved access to the facility and a bus priority lane during peak hours at the roundabout.

RACT understands that the Department of State Growth is working with the Kingborough Council to commence construction in 2021.

A Kingston park and ride facility is also supported by RACT's Greater Hobart Mobility Vision.

Fast track justification

RACT believes the Tasmanian Government should consider fast tracking the Huntingfield park and ride project for the following reasons:

1. There are fewer vehicle movements between the Kingborough region and Hobart as a result of COVID-19. Commencement of construction during this period will provide a window where lower levels of disruption are possible.
2. While understanding that the success of increased public transport patronage relies on more than a park and ride facility, the development of a new facility is an important step towards bus travel becoming more attractive to commuters. Also, RACT believes the bulk of the works could be undertaken before traffic flows return to normal levels, thereby reducing the impact on travel times and local businesses.
3. Lastly, planning for the park and ride project is well-advanced, with work expected to commence in 2021.

River Derwent Ferry Service

Project description

Traffic between eastern shore suburbs and Hobart is increasing. This is putting pressure on the Tasman Highway, Tasman Bridge as well as Macquarie and Davey streets during the morning and afternoon peaks.

As a result, Metro Tasmania and the Department of State Growth are developing plans for a River Derwent ferry service between Bellerive and Sullivans Cove in Hobart.

According to an MRCagney report commissioned by Metro, current government funding of \$500,000 a year would limit the service to one-vessel during morning and evening peaks, with no ferries during the middle of the day.

A comprehensive everyday timetable with high frequency is understood to be favoured by the Government and was the preferred minimum viable product. That option would involve hourly ferries in each direction from 6am to 9pm, seven days a week, with a frequency increasing to twice hourly ferries during weekday peaks.

Port-side infrastructure for the service will be provided by TasPorts, with two new ferry terminals to be established on both the western and eastern shores. Further infrastructure will be considered at other locations, based on demand following demonstrated success of the Hobart to Bellerive service.

Metro and the department are currently assessing costs, patronage and feasibility into the River Derwent ferry service, which RACT understands will be finalised soon.

A River Derwent ferry service is another key project in RACT's Greater Hobart Mobility Vision, starting with three stops but later growing to eight.

Fast track justification

RACT believes the Tasmanian Government should consider fast tracking the River Derwent ferry service for the following reasons:

1. The establishment of a successful and comprehensive free service will provide opportunities for businesses on both the eastern and western shores by increasing transport access.
2. A transport network that offers a range of options and reduces the current reliance on vehicle traffic will also enhance the appeal of Tasmania as a tourism destination when restrictions are lifted and travel confidence returns.
3. RACT believes that due to widespread disruption and adaption across the community, now is a good time to target travel behaviours. If additional options can be established while the community as a whole is adapting and changing there may be a chance of higher adoption.
4. Lastly, RACT understands planning for the ferry service is well-advanced.

Northern Projects

West Tamar Highway

Project description

The Tasmanian Government has developed a plan to address high priority projects along four sections of the West Tamar Highway north of Legana.

These projects will improve road safety and efficiency for vehicles travelling on the West Tamar Highway. The proposed upgrades, expected to commence in mid-2020, include:

North of Rosevears Drive to Gravelly Beach Road

- Road widening and sealed shoulders
- Improved junctions
- A new pedestrian footpath on the eastern side
- Vegetation clearing and sight benching for better visibility
- Improved stormwater drainage

Atkinsons Road to Waldhorn Drive

- Shoulder widening
- Road resurfacing and line marking

Exeter to Batman Highway

- New overtaking opportunities

Motor Road Junction

- Vegetation clearing and line of sight improvements for better visibility.

Concept designs for these projects have been developed, with construction expected to commence in mid-2020.

Fast track justification

RACT believes the Tasmanian Government should consider fast tracking priority projects on the West Tamar Highway for the following reasons:

1. There are fewer vehicle movements and therefore less congestion on the West Tamar Highway as a result of COVID-19. Fast tracking these priority projects will therefore be less disruptive to traffic, particularly if movement restrictions are eased gradually over the coming months.
2. There are significant growth pockets along the West Tamar Highway corridor and improved infrastructure will support the amenity and growth of these communities.
3. Importantly, these improvements will provide safer and more efficient travel for local residents as well as tourists and commercial operators, thereby supporting the local economy during a volatile time.
4. Lastly, planning for the priority projects are well-advanced, with work expected to commence in mid-2020.

North West Projects

Bass Highway – Boat Harbour Improvements

Project description

The Tasmanian Government has committed \$40 million to upgrade the Bass Highway, west of Wynyard. The Bass Highway - Wynyard to Marrawah Corridor Strategy has identified projects including road-widening, overtaking lanes, intersection improvements, road reconstruction and general road safety measures.

As part of this government commitment, safer access for the Boat Harbour Primary School was identified as a priority project in the strategy, including right-turn facilities on the Bass Highway.

This project will provide safer access to and from Boat Harbour Primary School, Dobsons Lane, Fists Lane and the Boat Harbour store for the local community, and improve the safety and efficiency of the Bass Highway for all road users.

Work is expected to start on the project in late 2020, with designs almost finalised.

The Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah Corridor Strategy revealed that Port Road at Boat Harbour has the third highest average daily vehicle movements on the Wynyard to Marrawah corridor. Specifically, this section of road has the second highest freight movements on the Wynyard to Marrawah corridor, and the third highest light vehicle movements.

Furthermore, there have been 43 crashes on the Bass Highway at Boat Harbour, between Tollymore and Morris Road, between 2010-2020. This included one fatality, two serious, four that required first aid, 11 minor and 25 that resulted in property damage only.

Fast track justification

The North West region has been heavily affected by COVID-19, with significant movement and retail restrictions in place until at least the end of April. This will impact the region economically, meaning investment in the region will be important.

RACT believes the Tasmanian Government should consider fast tracking investment in the Bass Highway, commencing with Boat Harbour for the following reasons:

1. RACT has long been a supporter of improvements to the Wynyard to Marrawah corridor and believes now is time to invest in the region. While earmarking the Boat Harbour project as the commencement of works along this corridor, a rescheduling of the whole pipeline of works should follow to support the region.
2. Investment in roads will help to stimulate the long-term economic outlook through safer and more efficient travel for industry and tourism. This will be particularly important in the North West once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and the situation improves.
3. Lastly, planning for the Boat Harbour project is well-advanced, with work expected to commence in late-2020.