



Sunshine Coast Mass Transit

Strategic Business
Case Overview



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Healthy.
Smart.
Creative.

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Acknowledgements

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About the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Strategic Business Case

To support the development of an improved public transport system for the Sunshine Coast, the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Strategic Business Case assesses the region's economic, land use and transport challenges, considers initiatives to address these opportunities and defines the priority for more detailed investigations into mass transit for the region. This is the first major step in building the case to encourage and secure Queensland and Commonwealth Government investment in the project.

The Strategic Business Case findings provide a clear basis to move to the development of:

- Preliminary Business Case to be prepared by Sunshine Coast Council by early 2020
- Detailed Business Case to be prepared by Queensland Government and Sunshine Coast Council by 2021

What is Mass Transit?

Mass transit is a form of public transport that concentrates on moving large numbers of people over a fixed route or network. Mass transit is not only the most efficient way to move people in a congested environment, but is also a city-shaping investment that allows for new urban development to be consolidated in its catchment, so most people can easily access transport services.

The Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Project Strategic Business Case

Sunshine Coast Council has been examining the need for a Mass Transit System to support our sustainable future since it released the landmark 'Line in the Sand' report in 2012.

We are now at the 'business end' of these investigations, which will see the development of a full business case to show why the mass transit project is needed and to demonstrate it can be delivered for an affordable cost.

Governments working together

The delivery of public transport infrastructure and services on the Sunshine Coast remains the responsibility of the Queensland Government. However, Council is progressing the first stages of the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit business case to enable the region to be well placed to secure the integrated public transport solution that the region will require as it continues to grow.

The Strategic Business Case is the first stage under Queensland's *Business Case Development Framework*. It is now completed and ready to be considered by relevant Queensland and Commonwealth Government agencies – their feedback will guide future stages of business case development work. Council has now commenced preparation of the second phase – the Preliminary Business Case.

Developing this integrated public transport system is part of a long-term agenda that requires sustained commitment and close partnership from all three spheres of government.

On 8 May 2019 a joint announcement was made by the Premier and Minister for Trade, the Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk and the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, The Hon. Mark Bailey, advising that the Queensland Government would partner with Council to prepare a detailed business case for the first stage of an integrated urban public transport solution for the Sunshine Coast, including pricing options for light rail.

A Mass Transit System for a growing region

Sunshine Coast Council has a vision to be 'Australia's most sustainable region – healthy, smart, creative'.

The Sunshine Coast Council area is one of the largest population centres in Queensland, and the 10th largest in Australia. Its population is growing at a higher rate than the South East Queensland region:

8,300 
people per year
(or greater than **2%** per annum)

Our population of **320,000** in 2019 is projected to grow to **386,960** in 2026 and to **518,000** in 2041 a **62%** increase in just 22 years

By 2050, there could be over

 **600,000** people in the Sunshine Coast Council area

During the past 30 years, the Sunshine Coast local government area has experienced significant urban development as a result of population and employment growth, and now represents a regional economy worth over \$15 billion.

The Sunshine Coast is also one of Australia's leading tourism destinations, offering a laid-back tourism experience centred around beaches, rivers and forests, all underpinned by a warm comfortable climate. In 2017–18, there were over 12 million visitors to the Sunshine Coast tourism region. This is expected to grow further with the expansion of the Sunshine Coast Airport to provide a new tourism and business gateway to the region by 2020.

More people means more transport demand. Achieving our vision to be a sustainable region means we have to change our present transport habits. Currently, 85% of all trips are taken in private vehicles, and if this continues it will combine with the projected population growth to cause increased congestion and a car-dominated urban environment. This would, in turn, reduce the liveability of the Sunshine Coast and impact on our enviable lifestyle.

The answer lies in improving alternatives to car travel, especially public transport and active transport infrastructure. Yet, despite being an emerging major city/region, the Sunshine Coast presently has a public transport system better suited to a regional town. A major upgrade of the public transport system will be needed as the region grows into Queensland's third city in the next two decades.

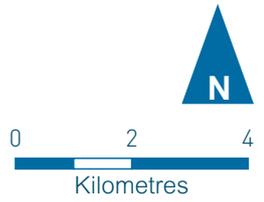
The Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Project aims to provide the backbone of a future integrated public transport system for the Sunshine Coast region. It will help manage congestion on our roads. It will support improved access to key destinations and employment areas. It will support infill within the existing urban footprint as people gravitate towards areas with strong transport connections.

Importantly, an integrated public transport system that connects residents to where they work, live and recreate, while also reducing congestion and improving the region's liveability as it continues to grow, is essential to achieving the vision for the Sunshine Coast.



**PROPOSED MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM
LEGEND**

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Local mass transit | High frequency bus network | Rural living |
| Regional rail | Principal Activity Centre | Urban footprint |
| Airport connection | Activity Centre | Regional landscape |
| Existing rail | | |



Our key challenges

The Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Project presents an opportunity to transform the region and deliver a range of economic, land use and transport benefits. It is an essential response to the key transport challenges facing our region as we continue to grow.

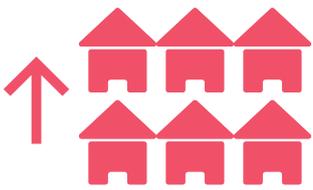
The Strategic Business Case has identified four key challenges in relation to the management of the region's growth:

- An expanding urban area
- A changing economic and employment base that needs to keep pace with population growth
- High levels of car dependence
- Growing congestion.

Population projected to grow from 320,000 in 2019 to **518,000** by 2041



Require at least **87,000** additional dwellings by 2041



Forecast increase in jobs of **77,000** over the next 25 years



The Sunshine Coast Urban Corridor – a key part of our plan to consolidate growth

The Sunshine Coast Urban corridor extends along the coast from Maroochydore to Caloundra. It has been designated as the focus for urban consolidation in the region in key policy documents:

Queensland Government – SEQ Regional Plan 2017 (page 122)

- The intent to use land and infrastructure efficiently will be supported by focusing density in and around appropriate locations along the urban corridor from Maroochydore to Caloundra, and in areas with superior access to public transport, employment and services.

Sunshine Coast Council – The Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 (page 3.3)

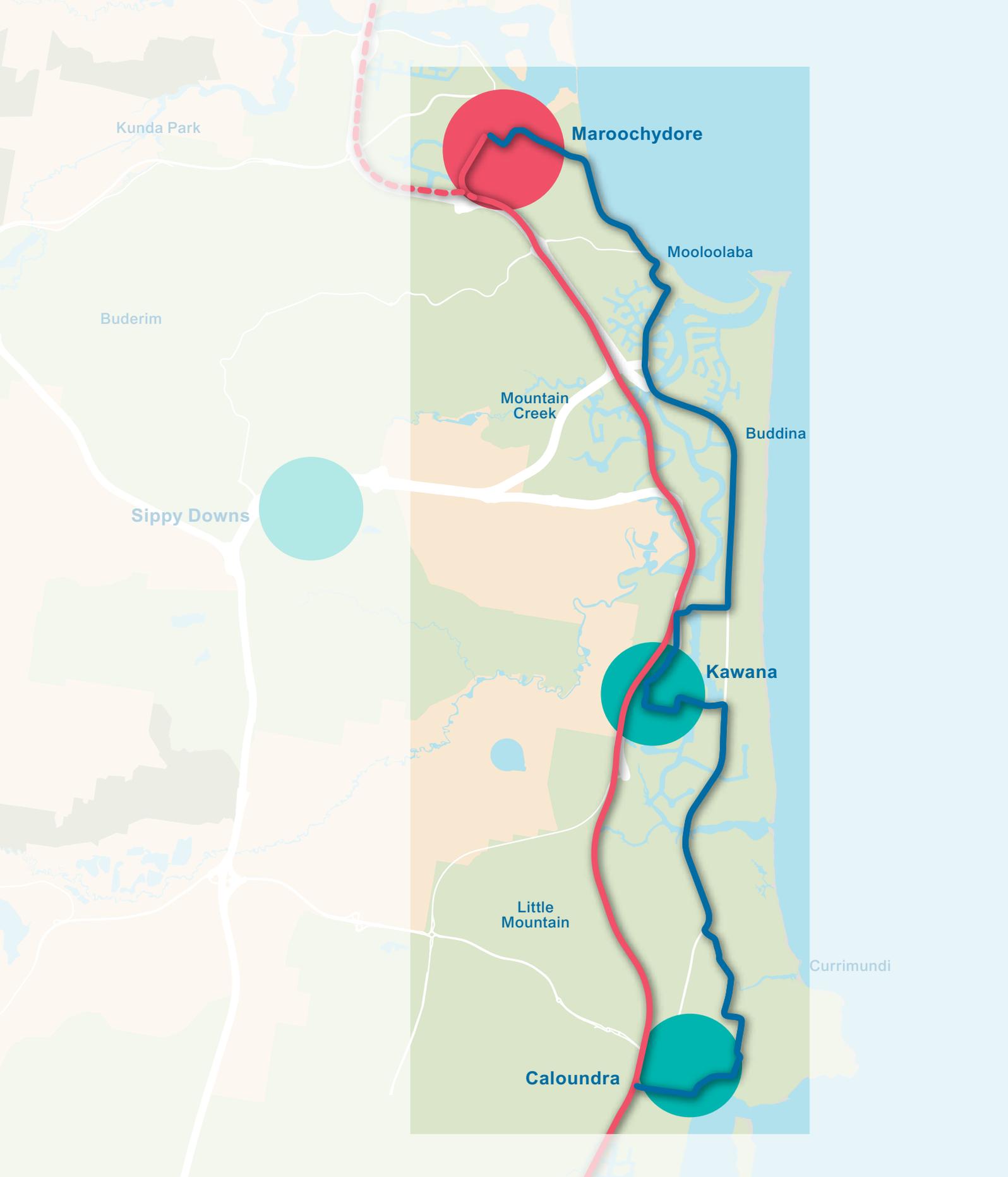
- Over time and in conjunction with more detailed local planning initiatives there is an increase in the intensity of development and the proportion of the population living along the Maroochydore to Caloundra Priority Transit Corridor. This corridor links regional activity centres and the major development areas, and is part of the integrated transport system for the Sunshine Coast.

Sunshine Coast Council – Urban transformation – Directions Paper for the Future of the Sunshine Coast 2017

- Council has been developing the concept of rapid transit from Maroochydore to Caloundra as a catalyst for changing travel patterns, economic growth and urban transformation. In particular, it has envisaged facilitating new forms of housing and development within the corridor that would enable a greater proportion of the population to be accommodated in more accessible, connected and well serviced locations. This would also support more affordable living options, and help to create attractive and accessible urban places.

Sunshine Coast Council – Environment and Liveability Strategy (page 46) 2017

- It is anticipated that the future growth will predominately be located in the coastal area with an emphasis on infill development transitioning to a more consolidated urban form supported by appropriate infrastructure, creating a new way of living and minimising impacts on our natural environment.

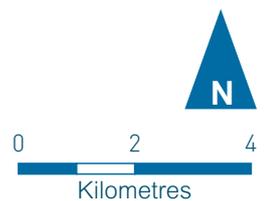


**SUNSHINE COAST URBAN CORRIDOR
LEGEND**

-  Local mass transit
-  Regional rail
-  Airport connection
-  Existing regional rail

-  Principal Activity centre
-  Activity Centre

-  Rural living
-  Urban footprint
-  Regional landscape



Urban expansion creates the need for new infrastructure and services. Urban consolidation can reduce infrastructure costs and make better use of existing services.

An expanding urban area

The Sunshine Coast urban areas are expanding in response to growth in population demand for housing. This brings with it the significant risk of urban sprawl and costs to lifestyle, environment and government. The response will need to include a balanced housing strategy that incorporates more urban consolidation.

The Queensland Government's ShapingSEQ policy document seeks a consolidated housing target for the Sunshine Coast of **62%** by 2041



This means an additional **53,700** dwellings are required to be consolidated in the existing urban area.

Without solutions being implemented, based on current forecasts, it is estimated only **41%** of the target **53,700** dwellings will be taken up, meaning the ShapingSEQ targets will not be achieved and the increased demand for housing will need to be met by expanding our urban area.

The evidence base clearly shows that at the aggregate level, the benefits of a consolidated housing approach substantially outweigh the costs.

Urban consolidation for a more sustainable future

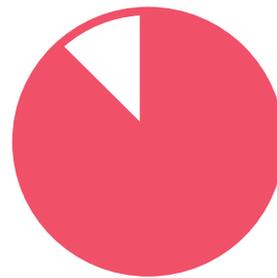
This long-term move to urban consolidation and infill development is a critical step in the evolution of the Sunshine Coast as a liveable, sustainable place where residents can easily access their places of employment or places of leisure.

The Sunshine Coast Urban Corridor from Maroochydore to Caloundra provides the key opportunity in the region to accommodate a significant proportion of the required new housing through urban renewal and infill development. To do this, it will need to attract growth and investment in housing development through improved urban amenity and access to better public transport solutions.

A changing employment base that needs to keep pace with population growth

Currently, approximately 90% of trips are local, contained within the Sunshine Coast region. The balance of trips are equally shared between travelling south towards Brisbane and the Moreton Bay region and travelling north and west. Retaining this high level of local employment will mean less time and effort spent travelling, increased economic productivity, less energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, and more time for family and other lifestyle activities.

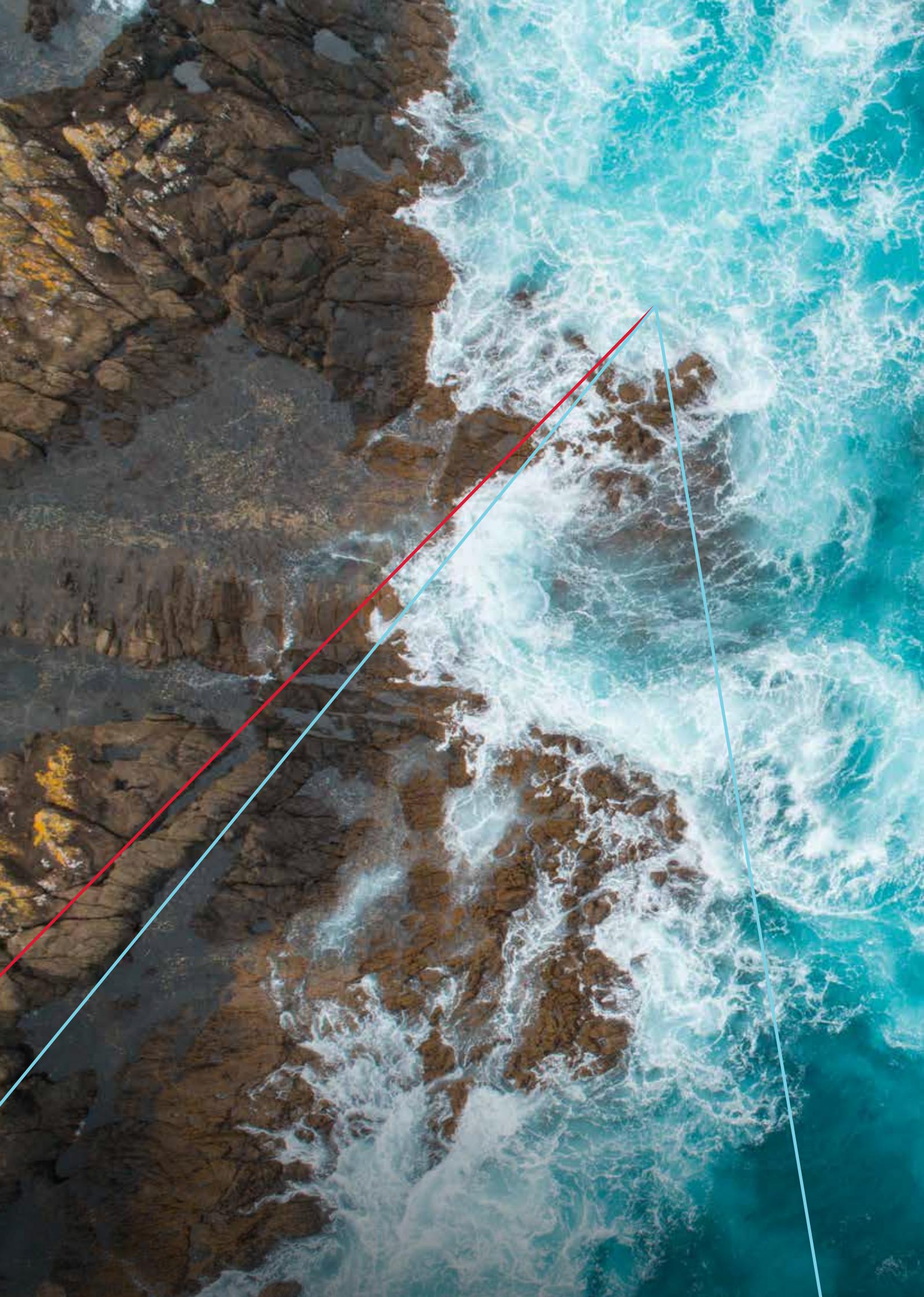
This level of employment self-containment is potentially at risk if efforts are not continued to expand high-value industries that offer more enduring opportunities for employment. The region also faces continuing competition as the demand from metropolitan Brisbane for workers increases.



Approximately **91%** of the local workforce live in the Sunshine Coast LGA

A major improvement of the transport system in the region can support the implementation of the Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Strategy by providing reliable connectivity between major population and employment centres in the Sunshine Coast Urban Corridor.

Further, if connected by reliable, integrated mass transit to Brisbane, these local employment centres, can benefit from important business-to-business accessibility.



High levels of car dependence

The region's travel patterns are dominated by trips made in passenger or commercial vehicles. The growth of car ownership on the Sunshine Coast is amongst the highest in Australia.

More people and jobs lead to more transport activity. If the current high level of private car use continues, congestion levels will worsen and the amenity of the region's key destinations will be eroded.

If there isn't a reduction in car dependency, an additional 830,000 daily vehicle trips are forecast on the Sunshine Coast transport network by 2041, which represents a 70% increase from 2016.

Council's *Integrated Transport Strategy*, the Queensland Government's *ShapingSEQ* and *SEQ Regional Transport Plans*, and the *Australian Government's Smart Cities Plan* all recognise the need to invest in alternative choices to car travel, especially high quality, frequent public transport, as the most effective way to reduce car dependence.

Growing congestion

Population and employment growth, combined with car dependency, means an escalation of congestion on the current road network.

The Sunshine Coast road network is already experiencing growing road congestion, particularly on Nicklin Way, Kawana Way, Caloundra Road and the areas around the Mooloolah River crossing. Between Caloundra and Mooloolaba, the network is almost completely reliant on Nicklin Way, which is the only direct connection between the two centres.

Congestion affects the economy

Congestion is currently costing over \$500 million per annum. This is forecast to grow, costing the regional economy \$1.4 billion per annum (in 2016 dollars) by 2041 (equating to approximately \$3 billion per annum in 2041 dollars).

Alternative modes of mass transit are more efficient and use less space to carry the same number of people. This means that we can reduce the need for investment in roads and car parking, and ensure that the roads we have operate better.





The benefits of actions

The benefits can only be achieved through a combination of land use and economic development planning undertaken in conjunction with the delivery of an efficient Mass Transit System.

Investing in a major new Sunshine Coast Mass Transit System will:

- Link priority economic areas, knowledge-based industry areas and tourist destinations.
- Offer enhanced liveability and greater access for a large majority residents to employment, schools, shopping, services and recreational facilities within 30 minutes of home.
- Provide an improved range of housing opportunities in established urban centres.
- Increase transport options (both public transport and active transport) and reduce traffic, parking requirements and environmental impacts.

Integrated public transport can unlock wider community benefits and new lifestyle opportunities for the Sunshine Coast region



The Sunshine Coast Mass Transit project creates more travel options and unlocks wider community benefits and new lifestyle opportunities.



CALOUNDRA



Stakeholder feedback

During 2012, 2014 and again in 2017 and 2018 Council engaged with the Sunshine Coast community on their views on public transport. The feedback has shown overwhelming support for increased public transport and for Council to continue advocating for investment in transport. Findings from the consultation can be found below.

The feedback received from this consultation provides valuable context on how the Sunshine Coast community may receive any mass transit solution.

As the Sunshine Coast Mass Transit Project progresses to Detailed Business Case phase in 2021-22, Council and the Queensland Government will continue to engage with the community and stakeholders on an ongoing basis.



2012 – The Line in the Sand Taskforce and Community hub

The taskforce canvassed six technology options for a new Mass Transit System as a game changer. An online consultation hub was launched in January 2012.

Over **2,900** people visited the hub, and **228** people took part in a poll.

There was strong support for light rail on the Sunshine Coast, with **82%** registering support and further **9%** saying “maybe”.

October/November 2014 – Consultation on Sunshine Coast Light Rail project.

Explaining potential benefits of light rail and gathering community feedback on a number of route options in the areas of Maroochydore, Mooloolaba, Kawana and Caloundra.

The community reaction to a potential light rail system for the Sunshine Coast was considered overwhelmingly positive with 87% supporting Council’s investigations into light rail.

Respondents identified they would use the northern areas of the route slightly more, while also identifying Maroochydore and Kawana as the two most important areas of the corridor, indicating a level of support for an initial stage of light rail being between Maroochydore and Kawana.

Overall, the main deterrents to the use of light rail were identified as fare cost, travel time, location of light rail corridor, access to the light rail, frequency and reliability and preference for driving.

In 2018, public consultation undertaken by Council found that over 80% of respondents agree that there is a current need to reduce reliance on cars and strongly support the need to increase access to reliable public transport in the region.

November 2017 and February 2018 – Development of *draft Integrated Transport Strategy*

Market research was undertaken between November 2017 and February 2018 to better understand community opinions and obstacles to travel behaviour change and to help inform the development of the draft Integrated Transport Strategy.

40% of respondents are moderately satisfied with the current transport system on the Sunshine Coast.

33% are not satisfied at all, and only 15% are 'very' or 'extremely' satisfied.

87% of respondents rarely or never use public transport.

Only 2% use public transport daily, 5% weekly and 6% once a month.

Key responses for not using public transport more regularly included:

- Just prefer the car
- Accessibility is poor
- Frequencies are inconvenient
- Journey times are not competitive
- 74% of respondents support Council's travel behaviour change focus.

77% 
of respondents support investment in light rail to help manage the growth impacts and maintain lifestyle

June/July 2018 – Consultation on the *draft Integrated Transport Strategy*

Council approved the draft Integrated Transport Strategy for community consultation between June and July 2018. This stage of consultation provided a strong community endorsement of the Strategy and helped refine the final Integrated Transport Strategy, in preparation for Council adoption.

97% of respondents support Council in continuing to advocate for investment in transport

The most important policy outcomes are considered to be:

- High frequency public transport connections
- Improved local feeder bus services
- Travel behaviour change
- Technology that helps people travel
- More compact urban form around public transport
- 93% of respondents agree travel behaviour change is critical and the community has a significant role to play.

81% 
of respondents agree with the need to reduce reliance on cars and strongly support the need to increase the public transport mode share target above 10%

Considering our options

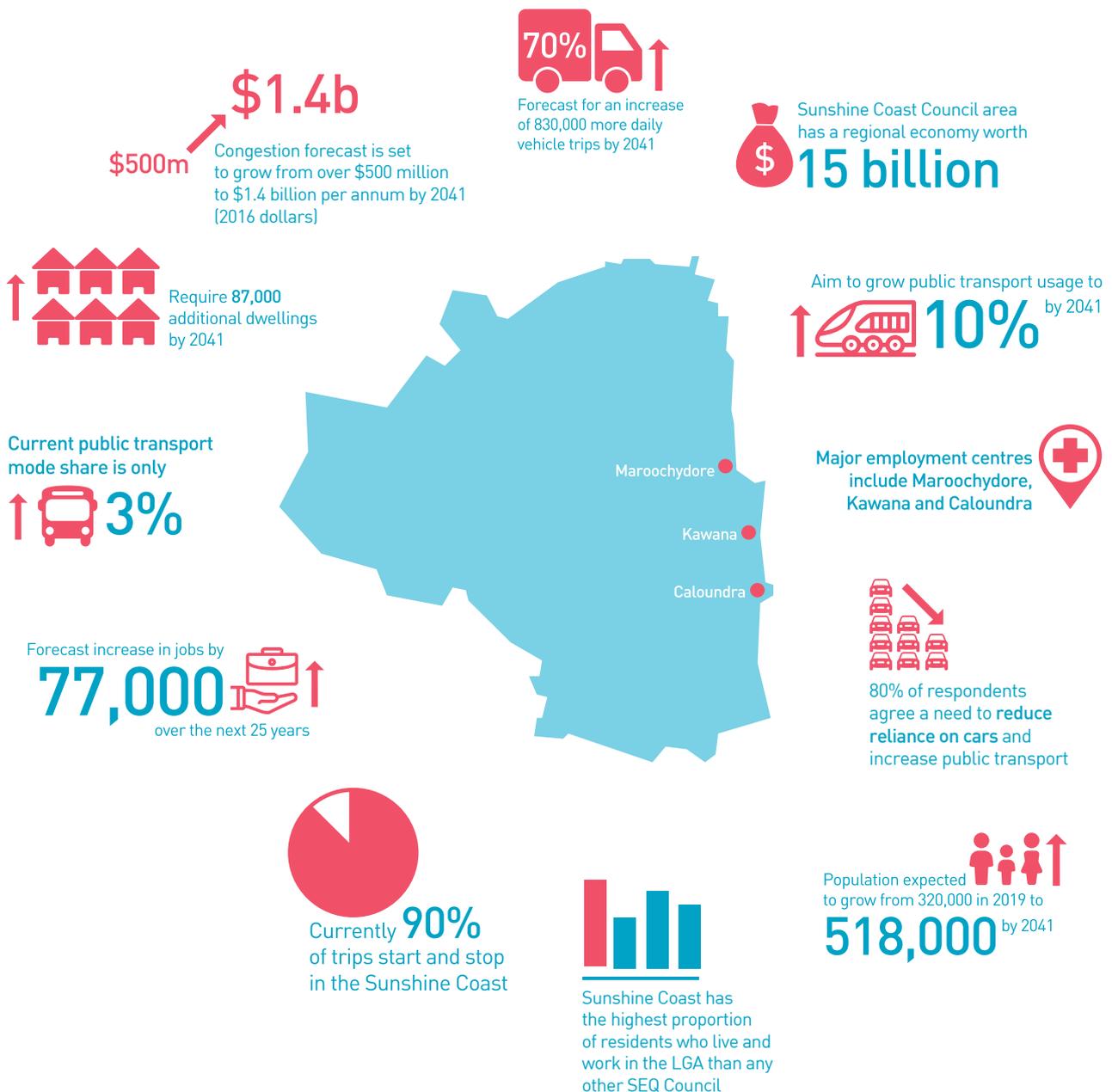
The Strategic Business Case considers a range of potential actions to address key challenges and opportunities.

Some of the options included mass transit infrastructure initiatives. Others focused on existing approved transport initiatives and other approaches such as reforms to land use planning in the region.

The results of this option testing confirmed that a new Mass Transit System is needed for the Sunshine Coast region. This new system will need to balance local accessibility with regional connectivity.

The proposed mass transport system will need to include a combination of transport modes such as rail, bus and active transport.

The next phase, a Preliminary Business Case, will further investigate potential modes and transport technologies.



What the Strategic Business Case found

The Sunshine Coast's four key challenges identified in the Strategic Business Case can be addressed by meeting three key service needs:

- ▮ A major improvement to mass transit to provide an integrated system connecting the major activity centres and residential areas and, in the future, linking it to Brisbane. This will reduce congestion growth, and maintain valuable road space for freight and commercial traffic.
- ▮ A coordinated strategy to accelerate urban consolidation and infill, with a focus on the Sunshine Coast Urban Corridor between Maroochydore and Caloundra. This can provide a settlement pattern that offers an improved range of lifestyle choices, with reduced car dependency and less need to travel long distances for work, education, recreation and shopping.

- ▮ An ongoing program to boost high value industries and connect local employment opportunities in areas close to mass transit, to connect business to business, and provide easier accessibility to the major employment and commercial areas.

The concept for the Mass Transit System is based on a technology that offers a high quality service capable of attracting a significant proportion of passengers out of cars. The mass transit technology must also have a demonstrated capability to act as a catalytic investment that will engage developers and the broader community in an urban transformation process. One important aim of that urban transformation process would be to ensure a significant proportion of new quality housing choices are located in the mass transit catchment.



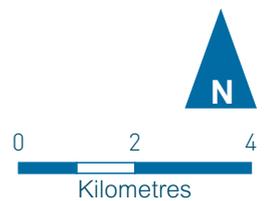


PRIORITIES FOR MASS TRANSIT INVESTMENT

LEGEND

- Local mass transit
- Regional rail
- Airport connection
- Existing regional rail
- Principal Activity Centre
- Activity Centre

- Rural living
- Urban footprint
- Regional landscape



Priorities for Mass Transit investment

The Strategic Business Case has determined the recommended priorities for investment in a new Mass Transit System should be as shown on the map:

Priority Area 1: Maroochydore to Kawana

- Local mass transit
- Urban renewal and economic activity areas
- Address worst congestion
- Short to medium term

Priority Area 2: CAMCOS South

- Mass Transit
- Gazetted corridor exists
- North Coast Line Connection
- Support new development (Beerwah East and Caloundra South)
- Short to medium term

Priority Area 3: Kawana to Caloundra

- Local Mass transit
- Urban renewal and economic activity areas (Kawana to Caloundra)
- Medium term

Priority Area 4: CAMCOS North

- Mass Transit
- Gazetted corridor exists
- Maroochydore direct connection through to North Coast line
- Support key activity areas (Maroochydore and Kawana)
- Potential for staged development with Area 2
- Longer term (safeguard)

Priority Area 5: Airport connection

- Service type to be confirmed
- Airport to Maroochydore and North Coast Line connection
- Rapid airport bus interim service
- Longer term

Conclusions and recommendations

The Sunshine Coast region is experiencing sustained growth which will increase the population by at least 71% in 25 years. Much of this growth is now being housed in new communities on the southern fringes of the region, which are likely to be dependent on car transport for most trips. This trend is set to accelerate unless existing urban areas, close to jobs and services, are revitalised and transformed to accommodate some of this future growth and these areas are serviced with transport infrastructure. Not taking action will create the risk of increasing congestion, reduced amenity of the major urban centres in the region and expansion into 'new greenfield areas'. This would impact on the liveability of the region and the lifestyle that makes it such an attractive place to live. The Strategic Business Case concludes there is a need for government intervention on three major fronts:

- Reducing car dependence
- Reversing the trend towards urban expansion
- Continuing to support a broad base of local employment opportunities.

Although it is an emerging major city, the Sunshine Coast presently has a public transport system more suitable to a regional town. A major upgrade of the public transport system will be needed as the region grows into Queensland's third largest city over the next two decades.

What is needed is a high frequency Mass Transit System which over time will extend from Sunshine Coast Airport through Maroochydore, Kawana and Caloundra to the existing North Coast Railway at Beerwah. This Mass Transit System will need to be supported by a network of local buses and incorporate new 'last mile' travel choices all aggregated into a single-user booking and payment interface.

Developing a Mass Transit System is a long term agenda. It requires ongoing commitment from all spheres of government working in close partnerships. The Strategic Business Case recommends a staging plan, and sharing of responsibilities, with the lead role being taken by the Queensland Government. The Sunshine Coast Council has a strong interest in the development of this new system, as it aims to ensure the region's lifestyle is protected, and its vision of being Australia's most sustainable region – healthy, smart, creative – is advanced.

Next steps



Council will continue to pursue the mass transit project into Preliminary and Detailed Business Case stages to further its objectives of guiding the development of the region on a sustainable path. In May 2019, the Queensland Government announced it would form a partnership with council to develop the Detailed Business Case.

This process will help to refine and make further decisions on the modes of transport to best benefit the Sunshine Coast in the short, medium and long-term.

Visit Council's website or contact the project team.

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