

*For immediate release:*

## Our transport troubles – how you rate the Sunshine Coast’s most pressing problems

MOST Sunshine Coast people believe upgrading the Bruce Highway is the region’s most critical transport infrastructure priority, according to a survey carried out by Regional Development Australia Sunshine Coast.

Residents also say they would happily use public transport, and take the train to Brisbane, if it was more efficient, faster and more reliable.

They ranked the upgrade of the Sunshine Coast airport to international status as the region’s least pressing priority.

RDA Sunshine Coast, which released the survey results today, has reaffirmed transport as a key issue for resolution to support the region’s future growth and economic development.

Late last year it released an integrated transport discussion paper for comment. A survey, which involved 768 people, was conducted between November and March. It was carried out to gauge residents’ attitudes towards transport priorities for the region.

Asked to name the most pressing project to relieve congestion for Sunshine Coast residents, 58.3% nominated the upgrade of the Bruce Highway.

Other projects, in order of priority, were:

- The North Coast rail duplication: 29.8%
- CAMCOS (a rail extension linking Beerwah with the coastal towns): 12.8%
- The Mooloolah River Interchange: 5.3%
- Light rail (between Caloundra and Maroochydore): 4.4%
- An international airport: 2.4%

RDA Sunshine Coast CEO Darrell Edwards said the survey findings would be used to develop a united voice on the priorities for regional infrastructure funding and construction.

Representatives of all three levels of government met in Maroochydore last week to discuss transport planning to meet the region's growing needs. They were joined by business leaders and transport experts at a forum organised by RDA Sunshine Coast.

RDA Sunshine Coast committee member Cameron Hall said: "We require a transport system that will meet the needs of the community, foster economic prosperity, and guarantee sustainability into the future."

The forum was addressed by Bob Hawes, CEO of the Hunter Business Chamber, and Nick Johnson, Senior Project Development Executive for RPS Project Management, who provided case studies from other regions. Discussion focused on key transport solutions needed for the Sunshine Coast to progress and reach its potential.

Mr Hall said impressive infrastructure projects, including the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, the Maroochydore Bright City initiative, Harmony and Aura would be delivered within 20 years. But, he said, current transport infrastructure would not cope unless there was an open and honest discussion on how projects could be fast-tracked.

Statistics indicate the Coast's population will increase by more than 60% to 514,000 by 2036; and that 80% of the region's workforce use private vehicles to get to and from work.

Survey comments indicated a high level of frustration at traffic congestion and delays on the Bruce Highway, and urgency for government to provide an upgrade as quickly as possible.

The North Coast Rail Duplication - to connect Beerburrum to Landsborough - was rated the second highest priority. In the forum, there was unanimous support for this project to be continued to Nambour. This project has been endorsed by Building Queensland for investment consideration but was overlooked in the State budget.

RDA Sunshine Coast CEO Darrell Edwards said this had been overlooked in this week's State Budget and the region now had to look towards the \$10b National Rail Fund to seek funding for this important and overdue piece of infrastructure.

The least pressing issue for survey respondents was the international airport, indicating people were more focused on their daily transport needs rather than international connections.

“It may also reflect the well-advanced nature of that project,” Mr Edwards said.

He said the survey had reflected a willingness to use public transport and including the train to Brisbane if it was faster, cheaper and more reliable.

“This creates a unique opportunity for transport operators, like Translink, to invest in services that will drive a modal shift in commuting,” Mr Edwards said.

He said these results had directed the focus of RDA Sunshine Coast towards alternate transport solutions such as express trains, public transport, car-pooling, and electric bikes to relieve congestion.

The survey showed people were supportive of private funding or ownership of infrastructure (62% support), but not if it meant user-pays funding and the introduction of tolls, with the results indicating very little appetite for tolls.

Mr Edwards said respondents had been self-selected – they had chosen to respond so there may be some statistical variance if a larger population was engaged. “Given the high number of respondents, and the common areas of frustration at traffic congestion and transport constraints, it is reasonable to believe that there is a lot of local community interest in the topic,” he said.

Detailed survey results are available on RDA Sunshine Coast’s website, [www.rdasunshinecoast.org.au](http://www.rdasunshinecoast.org.au).

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