

## **Economic Regulation of Airport Services**

### **Land transport to access Perth Airport**

#### **Introduction**

The City appreciates the opportunity of responding to the Productivity Commission Issues Paper "Economic Regulation of Airport Services" dated January 2011.

The submission would like to comment on two of the Terms of Reference of the Productivity Commission paper as follows:

5. > *the adequacy and arrangements for the control of planning, operation and service quality monitoring of land transport access to major Airports;*

> *Whether existing arrangements for the planning and operation of land transport linkages to the airports are effective; and*

The City of South Perth is a member of the *Perth Airports Municipality Group (PAMG)* and participates at regular meetings along with the 10 other member Local Governments. The City is affected by the operation of the Perth Airport in common with other members of the PAMG. In total, the population of the 11 members of the PAMG is in excess of 700,000 residents - which is just under 50% of the population of metropolitan Perth.

The City of South Perth is an inner metropolitan Local Government, south of the Swan River and situated approximately 6 kms to the west of Perth Airport. The City of South Perth is home to approximately 44,000 residents has the Swan and Canning rivers on three boundaries and the Town of Victoria Park to the east. The City is fully developed but is undergoing an "infill development" phase in common with many of our inner metropolitan Local Governments.

On this basis, population will not only increase within the City into the foreseeable future but also within our immediate neighbours, the Town of Victoria Park and the City of Belmont within whose boundary the Perth Airport is located.

The City has no direct boundary with the Perth Airport but is impacted by aircraft landing and takeoff noise. Aircraft noise is not the subject of this submission and therefore will not be addressed.

The purpose of this submission is to address transport access to and from the Perth Airport. Whilst there have been significant improvements to the State's Highway systems in recent years this has largely been in outer metropolitan areas and in country areas to the detriment of inner metropolitan areas such as those servicing Perth Airport.

Access from the City of South Perth to the Perth Airport is principally in a west to east direction mostly along either the Great Eastern Highway or Leach Highway.

## **Great Eastern Highway**

Initially motorists from South Perth would join the Canning Highway (Perth - Fremantle) and at the Causeway would join the Great Eastern Highway for direct access to the domestic airport or via Tonkin Highway for access to the International Airport.

The Great Eastern Highway is in various stages of deterioration between the Causeway and the Airport but work has recently commenced to improve access to the Airport by upgrading a 4km section of the Highway. Whilst the widening of Great Eastern Highway is long overdue even this work will not complete the section of the Highway between the Airport and the Causeway and this remaining work is seen as an urgent priority.

The Great Eastern Highway is a traffic signalled controlled road and this unfortunately will not change even when fully upgraded. At the present time there are some 6 traffic lights to manoeuvre between the Airport and the Causeway. As the principal route for traffic between the Airport and Perth this is seen as unsatisfactory and not conducive to an efficient modern transportation system.

## **Leach Highway**

Alternatively, motorists from the City who live in the southern suburbs would normally travel south east along Manning road and then east along Leach Highway before reaching Tonkin Highway to access the Airport.

## **Airport Land - a contributing factor**

One of the major problems associated with access to and from the Perth Airport has been traffic issues emanating from the significant growth in industrial and transportation industries within the grounds of the airport on Commonwealth land.

Use of this land for this purpose may make sense from a land development point of view and because the airport land is close to state and national highway systems such as Roe Highway, Tonkin Highway, Leach Highway, Great Northern Highway and Great Eastern Highway, virtually no improvements have been made to these highways to match the huge increase in industrial (and office and service) traffic located within airport land. The highway system servicing the Airport within say a 5 km radius of the Perth airport is now grossly inadequate and needs major upgrading work.

Whilst it is generally understood that planning is progressing to upgrade intersections of these Highways to improve access to the airport as part of the Gateway WA project, this should have been done many years ago as the commercialisation of Perth Airport commenced. Developer contributions in the form of a Highway upgrading levy should have been imposed on all new developments within the Perth Airport precinct to pay for the cost of improvement.

An inevitable consequence of the congestion with heavy vehicles on these roads is that passengers to the Perth International Airport in particular suffer the inconvenience of an inferior road system with no direct connection to the City of Perth. In addition the lack of public transport, such as a rail system connecting the airport to the City exacerbates congestion. Regrettably, this is destined to continue for the foreseeable future until planned improvements occur.

## **Investing in Urban Passenger Transport**

In regards to investing in urban passenger transport, the City certainly fully supports greater reliance on public transport rather than continued increased reliance on the use of private motor vehicles. Referring to the potential population growth of the greater City of Perth, the cost of not providing an efficient and effective public transport system will potentially result in a doubling of the number of cars on our roads within the next 40 years if the population doubles. Clearly existing roads will not accommodate the potential increased number of road users and whilst road enhancements can and will be made over this time, it cannot be realistic or sustainable to double the amount of road pavement on major highways to accommodate increased traffic. Increased urban passenger transport in the form of heavy rail, light rail and buses is therefore seen to be a high priority to reduce reliance of use of motor vehicles, and reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, prevent major congestion and expansion of our highway networks.

In relation to investment in urban railways, it is noted that Perth has been a leader in this initiative with the recent extension to the heavy rail network which now operates from north of Joondalup to Mandurah in the south to supplement the existing west/east and south/east network. The Commonwealth could and should give consideration to funding further expansion to the rail network - either heavy rail or light rail - to Perth Airport.

Improvement in the public transportation corridors could be funded by changes to local Town Planning schemes to permit more intense development along those routes. For example, activity centres located along the major routes to the Airport could be serviced by some form of light rail network which would operate between the heavy rail stations and the Airport.

This would provide opportunities for more intense development along these urban passenger transport corridors and provide an acceptable form of access to the Airport.

The developments could take the form of transit oriented developments [TODs] or pedestrian oriented developments [PODs] which would provide diversified land use opportunities within easy reach of public transport. The Commonwealth could give consideration to assisting State and Local Governments in planning and facilitating such infrastructure and developments. Greater use of public transport along major transport corridors should be encouraged and incentives provided to allow developers to contribute to transport systems.

## **Perth Airport Transport Master Plan**

It is acknowledged that a Perth Airport Master Plan has been developed and is being implemented over the next decade or so. It is emphasised however that work urgently needs to occur on the major highways that either service or are near to the Perth Airport because of existing congestion issues. The development of new roads needs to occur as a matter of priority. The development of a passenger rail system connecting the airport to the city is also considered a priority.

## **Summary**

Perth is particularly poorly served by the quality of existing transport infrastructure and systems to its main domestic and international airport. The improvement in transport infrastructure has simply not kept pace with the growth in the State's population, air traffic (including fly-in - fly-out) and air passengers over the past decade. Major problems currently exist and this has been exacerbated by the recent approval and development of many commercial and transport based industries located on airport land.

Whilst it is understandable that these industries desire to be located near existing highways - this has been to the detriment of the same highway system that services record users of the airport which of course is the primary purpose of the land.

Without any other major form of transport to the airport, ie heavy rail or light rail (trams), the highway system is simply overloaded and has become inefficient and incapable of handling even normal traffic volumes - particularly at peak times.

Unfortunately, this situation is likely to continue - and worsen - for many years to come because of the long lead in times for road improvement works. With a State leading the country in economic development this is a sad reflection of lack of planning and investment by successive State Governments.