SMART Calls for Reduction in Illawarra to Sydney Travel Times

SMART Infrastructure Facility at the University of Wollongong is calling for the NSW Government to commit to a reduction in road and rail travel times between Wollongong and Sydney Airport, reducing the time for road travel from 94 to 68 minutes.

The call for better planning for infrastructure to deliver reduced congestion and travel times was made in the SMART Infrastructure Facility’s submission to the NSW Government’s discussion paper on the development of a long-term transport master plan.

"It’s critical that the NSW Government, in undertaking a long term transport master plan, uses the opportunity to give clear and concise commitments to the people of NSW that passenger and freight transport will improve over the next 20 years," SMART CEO Garry Bowditch said.

"Across nearly all metrics relating to the road and rail systems of transport there has been a deterioration in performance as the population has grown and the intensity of economic activity has increased.

"The Illawarra is a critical hub for business and for how it connects with Sydney. The connections between Sydney and Wollongong need to be world class so that we can compete in a tough global market.

"Our high quality workforce that connects us to the world spends more time commuting than ever before. The transport system is struggling to deal with congestion, which in turn leads to lost productivity and amenity.

"Commitment to a series of benchmarks that measure the performance of the transport system and report on it every year are critical to investment decisions and system improvement," Mr Bowditch said.

"We have put forward a range of targets covering road and rail travel for Wollongong to Sydney. There should be an aim to increase the average speed of the 100 busiest roads in NSW at Peak, by 15% in ten years and a further 15% in 20 years.

"That target is the same for rail, taking a journey from Wollongong to Sydney Central being reduced from 91 minutes today to 66 minutes in 2030.

"These are tangible and purposeful objectives that anchor the Master Plan as meaningful in the eyes of business and the community.

"Without clear benchmarks of performance and a commitment to deliver against them, the process of reform will run the risk of being directionless and consume huge resources without improving the transport system," Mr Bowditch stated.
“The Government’s discussion paper poses important questions for the Illawarra and NSW in relation to transport customer service, planning, integration of the modes of transport, transport quality and funding. It is important that we respond and advise on best practice approaches to these questions.”

SMART has recommended five key principles of good transport infrastructure governance that should drive all future deliberations of integrated transport planning and management.

These are:

i) Whole of government planning and coordination;
ii) Enhanced accountability; facilitated by
iii) Independent review;
iv) increased transparency; and
v) Better information and analytics as we know very little about the system of infrastructure, and if a change is in fact an improvement.

“The adoption of these five principles can ensure we have a planning and management system that is world’s best practice,” Mr Bowditch concluded.

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About SMART Infrastructure Facility

The Australian Government, NSW Government and University of Wollongong partnered to establish the SMART Infrastructure Facility with $62 million in funding. SMART stands for ‘Simulation, Modelling, Analysis, Research and Teaching’.

SMART has established Australia’s first Professorial chairs in infrastructure economics, infrastructure governance, infrastructure systems, and infrastructure modelling and simulation. A modern and sustainable four-storey facility has been developed at the University of Wollongong campus housing 30 integrated laboratories, simulation and modelling hub, rail logistics research centre and 200 higher degree research students. SMART is one of the largest facilities of its type in the world.