



Gippsland Transport Strategy 2008-2020

Prepared for

Gippsland Local Government Network

September 2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1. THE STUDY REGION	1
1.1 Summary	1
1.2 Background	3
1.3 Demand for the Network	3
1.3.1 Population and society	3
1.3.2 Main Population Centres.....	7
1.3.3 Social Infrastructure	8
2. SUPPLY OF THE NETWORK	10
2.1.1 Roads.....	10
2.1.2 Rail	11
2.1.3 Sea.....	11
2.1.4 Air.....	12
2.1.5 Public Transport services.....	13
3. FUNDING STRATEGIES.....	15
3.1 Summary.....	15
3.2 National Considerations	15
3.2.1 Future vision, policy objectives and principles	15
3.2.2 Infrastructure Australia	16
3.2.3 AusLink	16
3.2.4 AusLink Strategic Regional Projects	17
3.3 State Considerations	18
3.3.1 Victorian overarching principles	18
3.4 Regional Infrastructure Development Fund.....	19
3.4.1 Economic Criteria.....	19
3.4.2 Socio-economic Criteria	19
3.4.3 State and Regional Priority	19
3.4.4 Project Feasibility and Delivery	19
3.4.5 Financial.....	20
3.4.6 Higher Priority Project Proposals	20
4. POTENTIAL PRIORITIES	21
4.1 Gippsland Transport Strategy 2005	21
4.2 SEATS Strategic Network	27
4.3 High Country Council Tourist Network.....	29
4.4 Submissions by the Gippsland Local Government Network	32
4.5 Potential projects identified by the Gippsland Local Government Network.....	33
4.6 Summary.....	33
5. REGIONAL PRIORITIES.....	36
5.1 Road and rail linkages into Melbourne, ACT and NSW	36
5.1.1 Princes Highway: Gippsland–Melbourne	36
5.1.2 South Gippsland Highway: Gippsland–Melbourne.....	39
5.1.3 Princes Highway: Gippsland–Sydney	40
5.1.4 Monaro Highway: Gippsland–NSW and the ACT	41
5.1.5 Rail linkages: Bairnsdale to Melbourne.....	42
5.2 Effective road and rail linkages to the Port of Hastings.....	43
5.3 Ensure that Barry Point is suitably safeguarded to allow inward movements of project cargo	44
5.4 Intermodal connection points at Morwell and Bairnsdale	44
5.5 Inter-regional connectivity of the road network in Gippsland.....	45
5.6 Implementation and Communication Strategies.....	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48
STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION	50

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2005, GLGN, amongst other parties, developed a Gippsland Transport Strategy to guide collective effort in improving the region's transport infrastructure and services. Much has changed in the intervening period and it was agreed that these changes necessitate a reconsideration of transport strategy, investment and focus.

Achievements 2005–2008

In the intervening period there have been significant transport related achievements in Gippsland. Some highlights include:

Increasing the recognition of the land transport network at a State and Commonwealth level through such highlights as:

1. Traralgon to Sale duplication is earmarked for funding under AusLink II.
2. Bypasses of Leongatha and Korumburra are noted in the Victorian Government submission to Infrastructure Australia.
3. Bridges across Gippsland has been provided with AusLink Strategic Regional Funding.
4. The Victorian Government has injected funding into identifying future transport infrastructure improvements to support the Latrobe Valley's rapidly growing clean coal industry.

Achieving significant improvement in rail and public transport services into and within the region, in particular:

1. The completion and successful uptake of Regional Fast Rail.
2. The successful buy back of the regional rail network lease to facilitate maintenance on regional lines and to progress major rail projects.
3. The growing role of V/Line who is now responsible for managing and maintaining the below rail network.
4. The achievements of the Transport Connections projects in reducing isolation in rural areas.
5. Reviews of bus services in a number of major towns in Gippsland including Wonthaggi, Inverloch, Lakes Entrance and Sale – Latrobe City just announced.
6. The successful development of the Gippsland School Bus Flexibility Project.
7. The proposed triplification of the Dandenong rail line as highlighted in Meeting our Transport Challenges.

In general, the focus of transport initiatives developed by the LGAs of Gippsland has, over the intervening period, been moving along a spectrum from the isolated consideration of projects within any one LGA to recognising the benefits and pushing for initiatives that maximise benefits to Gippsland as a whole. This change in focus has stretched to the point that out of region initiatives, such as the development of the Port of Hastings and potential investment in Melbourne's urban transport network, are now viewed as opportunities to improve economic, social and environmental outcomes for Gippsland as a whole.

Changes to Operating Environment 2005–2008

These highlights have been achieved in the context of a changing operating environment. Over this period there have been changes to the way in which the transport network and transport policy and program delivery is set. Some changes that have occurred to the operating environment include:

- The buy-back of the below rail lease from the private sector by the Victorian Government
- V/Line’s increased role in the region as both service provider and rail network access provider
- Refocussing of priorities of State and Federal Government in transport policy and funding on:
 - Interconnectivity between modes and types of transport such as rail freight and passenger rail
 - Maximising efficiency of a supply chain rather than a particular element – which involves identifying and dealing with bottlenecks which impact on the whole of a supply chain
 - Greater emphasis on proof of cross region and cross sector support prior to initiatives being funded by the public sector
 - Safety of the transport network – as signified by State and Federal Government funding focus.

Gippsland – Strategic Issues

In order to guide their future direction, the Gippsland Local Government Network (GLGN) has developed a Gippsland Regional Development Strategy.

The regional vision is “Gippsland is a dynamic region, harnessing the community’s full capabilities, abundant physical resources and remarkable diversity to offer a range of exciting opportunities and great lifestyle choices”.

The priority area of the Gippsland Regional Development Strategy improved access and connectivity includes a road and freight infrastructure element with an aim to “improve access to, from and within Gippsland”.

Particular challenges facing major industry sectors of Gippsland

In the 2005 Gippsland Transport Strategy, the economic importance of various industry sectors was outlined. In 2008 a new dimension that is common to all sectors is an expectation that climate change will have an impact on the region, as well as the proposed emissions trading scheme. Together these will have significant impacts on all the major industries of the region. A review of these sectors for this update reveals the following industry specific challenges and considerations.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector, including dairy, is and will continue to be a dominant industry sector for the region in terms of economic importance. Processed goods from the region remain reliant on effective land transport supply chains and access to international gateways – particularly the Port of Melbourne and the Monash Freeway into Melbourne.

As with other industries, climate change will impact on the region's agriculture. As many of the region's water reserves will remain with water (while those of neighbouring regions may be drying up) new agricultural opportunities may arise. It is possible that Gippsland may further develop market gardening and that it will be targeted as a suitable place for plantations for carbon credits for example.

Carbon pricing and fuel prices will be long-term and significant challenges for this sector and may lead to detailed consideration of alternative transport modes such as rail for this sector's export task.

Timber

The timber sector is and will continue to be important to the economic growth of the region. Ensuring that the current rail dominated supply chain is not impeded as a result of growing passenger rail demand is paramount to the ongoing sustainability of this sector. Much work has been progressed in this sector in improving inter-regional road links from coop or forest to production centres and intermodal transition points. This work needs to be continued to ensure the ongoing competitiveness of Gippsland.

With the introduction of an Australian Emissions Trading Scheme (AETS) will come an opportunity for the region to grow its productivity through timber plantations for carbon credits.

Minerals

Since the development of the 2005 strategy the importance of the minerals sector – including oil, gas, coal, mineral sands and iron ore – to underpinning the future economic growth of the region has increased dramatically. In this sector it is likely that the proposed Australian Emissions Trading Scheme will see the production of brown coal reduced over the coming decades, while the production of other minerals, especially for export, will be increased.

This leads to a number of considerations:

1. Much of this future export task is best suited to movements by rail to export gateway. Ensuring that this export task is not impeded as a result of inadequate rolling stock or rail path capacity is crucial to long-term economic growth for the region as a whole. Furthermore, ensuring that the Victorian ports and their land transport connections are capable of meeting the growing demand will be crucial to the viability of many of these export opportunities.
2. The development of new operations in this sector has brought a very specialised and particular freight task into the region – the movement of 'prefabricated project cargo units' (usually built overseas and shipped as final units). The carriage of these cargoes usually involves irregular movements of over-dimension and over-weight units and requires particular consideration of how the project cargoes arrive in Victoria and move within Gippsland to final location – the production facility. The Victorian Government has allocated \$100,000 to Gippsland Resources Infrastructure Development (GRID) to examine the infrastructure requirements for incoming prefabricated units and outgoing dried brown coal related product. GRID has undertaken significant work on the movement of project cargo. Preliminary conclusions are that the most cost effective solution for moving project cargo is to barge units into the Barry's Beach facility and transfer units to heavy vehicles for transport on either the current network or through new purpose-built routes to final location.
3. The growth in this sector will also require an increased passenger transport task for workers during construction and operation of these facilities. The initial understanding is that the current

working population of Gippsland will be insufficient, both in terms of number and specialised skills, to meet this need and human resources will be required from a broader hinterland. As such, consideration will need to be given to ensuring that both the road and rail passenger transport network will meet the needs of this growing demand.

Tourism

There have been some developments recently. You can speak to Phil Rickard from East Gippsland Shire for details. Contact 5153 9500. I believe Tourism Australia has identified 8 locations Australia wide as Icon Locations. This will have an impact on Transport linkages, both road and rail. Potentially public transport access may need to be added as a priority if this region is to be extensively promoted by Tourism Australia campaigns.

The importance of the tourism sector to Gippsland is growing from a strong base. Most recently Tourism Australia has identified parts of Far East Gippsland up to the Sapphire Coast in Southern NSW as a Tourism Icon known as the Australia's Coastal Wilderness. Changing dynamics to domestic tourism including the impact of climate change in Victoria are likely to put Gippsland at an advantage as costs of travel increase. Furthermore, climate change is likely to impact positively on tourism as many of the region's water reserves will remain with water, allowing a continuance of the water sports, river and lake fishing that have traditionally attracted visitors to the region. These are activities that climate change is taking away from some other regions. Gippsland must ensure that the transport network supports the growing movement of tourists into and within the region. Particular transport links within the region's transport network have been identified as significant bottlenecks to greater opportunities in this sector. Those bottlenecks of particular concern are:

- The unsealed Dargo High Plains Road
- The unsealed Licola–Jamieson Road
- The Great Alpine Road, which requires safety improvements
- The unsealed Benambra Corryong Road
- The unsealed South Face Road
- The inadequate connections into and within Southern Gippsland servicing Phillip Island and Wilson's Promontory.

Challenges for 2008 and Beyond

In discussion with a number of stakeholders in the development of this update, particular challenges that need to be considered when developing transport related priorities for the region have been identified. These are outlined in the box below.

BOX 1 CHALLENGES FACING GIPPSLAND TRANSPORT

1. New major developments in Gippsland for construction and operation purposes as well as movement of project cargo in and, in some cases, export cargo out, will be a major challenge. They will result in an increased volume of passenger transport demand into and within Gippsland. These developments include but are not limited to:

- Desalination plant
 - Major coal and energy projects
 - Continued commitment to Latrobe power stations
 - Mining prospects in eastern Gippsland region.
2. Carbon pricing in the medium to long term and the rising cost of fuel in the short term may change fundamental approaches to transportation of goods and people and constitute major challenges.
3. Urban encroachment on western Gippsland will change the area's economic base and provide new urban transport challenges.
4. There will be competing demands on rail services from increasing passenger demand and the increased freight task moving to rail. This will result in competition for network time and will require a significant upgrade to the network to ensure safety, timeliness and reliability of service.
5. The export potential of Gippsland's major industries and thus Gippsland's economic growth is inextricably related to export gateways and the land transport linkages to them. There will be continued reliance on the port of Melbourne for the growing containerised export task and a greater need for effective connections to the port of Hastings, particularly for a growing bulk freight task.

Summary of Priorities

Reviewing the priorities in the 2005 study indicates that the main issues outlined in the brief remain current. That is, the economic sustainability of the region is reliant on its external connections, inter-regional connectivity and efficient intermodal connection points. Therefore, preparing for the future will require refocussing on the priorities of Gippsland in the light of the changing context and challenges that Gippsland will face. Four primary challenges that have been identified are:

- External connectivity – Connectivity improvements, particularly from Gippsland into Melbourne, to the Victorian ports and the interstate freight rail network needs to be addressed.
- Inter-regional connectivity – The councils of Gippsland have worked effectively with VicRoads and the State and Federal Governments to ensure that the supply chain flows around identified bottlenecks are improved. However, outstanding projects remain valid and important.
- Intermodal connection points – Ensuring that the road/rail intermodal connection points at Morwell and Bairnsdale operate effectively remains paramount. In fact, the role of rail freight out of Gippsland to export gateways needs to be reprioritised in the context of increasing export potential for bulk commodities, as well as fuel and carbon pricing considerations.
- Non-infrastructure issues – The success of Regional Fast Rail has seen a renewed focus on ensuring other elements of the passenger transport network best meet the needs of private, business and commuter travel within Gippsland.

In the context of the preceding discussion it can be seen that a number of initiatives could be candidates to be priority projects likely to achieve the best overall outcomes for the Gippsland Region. Shortlisting is inevitably difficult. However, in reviewing the available evidence and priorities of all levels of government, it is the GLGN view that its focus and collective support should be in the following areas:

- Further develop effective road and rail linkages into Melbourne and to the ACT and NSW to ensure efficient movement of freight and people
- Further develop effective road and rail linkages to ensure efficient movement of freight to the Port of Hastings
- Ensure that the Barry Point facility is suitably safeguarded to allow inward movements of project cargo
- Further develop intermodal connection points at Morwell and Bairnsdale
- Ensure that the interregional connectivity of the road network in Gippsland meets the growing demands placed on it by the various industry sectors.

The Implementation Strategy that was devised for the previous study contains significant currency. In particular GLGN needs to focus its implementation effort on the following cornerstones. Each one is consistent with the objectives of the principal funding sources discussed in Section 2.

1. Provide well constructed and timely delivery of funding proposals and submissions, specialising in novel and influential marketing tools at different levels of influence

Related to the first cornerstone, the GLGN needs to demonstrate its ability to deliver to completion on-time, robust designs, applications and projects. Work completed since 2005 in this area indicates an ability to achieve this.

2. Establish the DaB technique: ‘Design and Bank’ transport proposals that may be rolled out at short notice for last minute funding opportunities

The reality of large funding agencies is they often have difficulty spending their allocations. This is for a variety of reasons, but in many cases there is a scamper to find legitimate capital works projects on which to spend a certain amount prior to some fiscal cut-off date such as the end of financial year. The organisation that can demonstrate that it has plans, approvals, and contractual documentation in place, is very welcome at this time. Again, there is a cost to this preparedness, but the up-side is the potential for developing a reputation for being a reliable fall-back in these circumstances.

3. Pursue opportunities for collaboration wherever possible

The success of the Bridges Across Gippsland Strategic Regional Funding Application and the requirements of many other funding processes, put emphasis on the importance of collaboration to achieve success. This extends to advocacy and communication of the needs of Gippsland to the broader audience.

1. THE STUDY REGION

1.1 Summary

Between 2005 and 2008 there have been significant transport related achievements in Gippsland. Some highlights include:

Increasing the recognition of the land transport network at a State and Commonwealth level through such highlights as:

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1. The completion and successful uptake of Regional Fast Rail
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These highlights have been achieved in the context of a changing operating environment. Over this period, the way in which the transport network and transport policy and program delivery is set has been changing. Some changes that have occurred to the operating environment include:

- V/Line's increased role in the region as both service provider and rail network access provider
- Re-focussing of priorities of State and Federal Government in transport policy and funding on:
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Minerals

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Tourism

The importance of the tourism sector to Gippsland is growing from a strong base. Changing dynamics to domestic tourism in Victoria are likely to put Gippsland at an advantage as costs of travel increase – but only if the transport network supports this movement. Particular transport links within the region’s transport network have been identified as significant bottlenecks to greater opportunities in this sector. Those bottlenecks of particular concern are:

- The unsealed Dargo High Plains Road
- The unsealed Licola–Jamieson Road

- The Great Alpine Road, which required safety improvements
- The unsealed Benambra Corryong Road
- The unsealed South Face Road
- The inadequate connections into and within Southern Gippsland servicing Phillip Island and Wilson's Promontory.

This section revisits and updates population and industry information that was gathered in the previous strategy. In particular the section gives an overview of the region's:

- demographics
- main population centres
- current transport network
- public transport services
- major social infrastructure – education and hospitals
- major industries.

1.2 Background

The Gippsland Region is in eastern Victoria and encompasses the six Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Baw Baw, Bass Coast, South Gippsland, Latrobe, Wellington and East Gippsland. It comprises approximately 17% of Victoria's geographical area and is home to over 15% of all people in Victoria

The Gross Regional Product (GRP) for the Gippsland Region has been estimated at \$8.4 Billion. The Region is responsible for 79,952 jobs of which retail, agriculture, health and manufacturing are the major contributors.

The transport infrastructure network and the services provided on that network is a key plank in maintaining and improving the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the region. Demand for this network is a factor of the demographic and geographical needs of the resident population and business sectors whilst supply. Demand involves both the movement of people and goods whilst supply encompasses the transport infrastructure network (road, rail, air and sea hubs) as well as the transport services available.

1.3 Demand for the Network

1.3.1 Population and society

Over 250,000 people live in the Gippsland region; their distribution by LGA is shown in Figure 1 The City of Latrobe accounts for almost a third of the population, with almost 73,000 residents in 2007.

From 2006 to 2007, all LGA populations increased by an average of 1.25% as are indicated in Table 1.

Bass Coast’s population rose two per cent (the highest regional growth rate) from 2006 to 2007, when it had over 28,000 residents. Baw Baw, with the next highest regional growth rate, had a population of over 39,000 in 2007. East Gippsland’s population has risen to almost 42,000 in the most recent census, comparable with Wellington’s population.

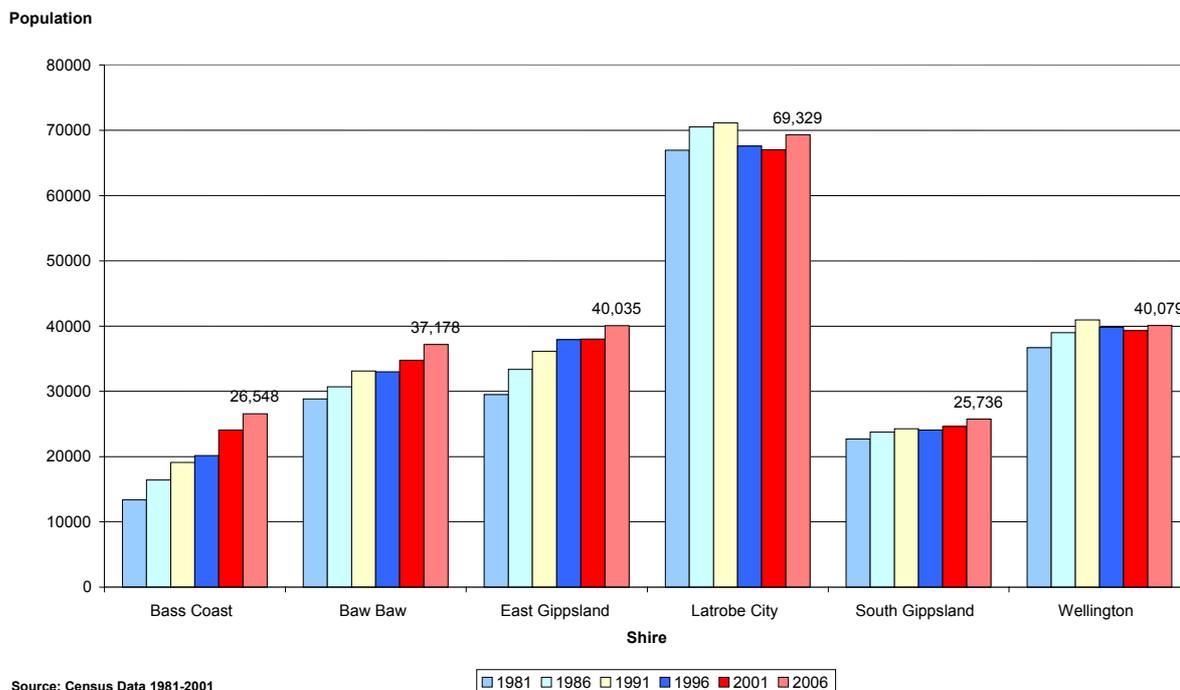
Although South Gippsland has the smallest population of the local government areas with 26,830 residents in 2007, its recent population growth, like that of Bass Coast, represents in part the arrival of residents wishing to experience the ‘sea change’ phenomenon.

TABLE 1 POPULATION GROWTH IN GIPPSLAND 2006-07

Gippsland LGA	2007 (Persons)	Change 2006-07	Growth Rate % 2006-07
Bass Coast	28,081	557	2.0
Baw Baw	39,078	594	1.5
East Gippsland	41,954	593	1.4
Latrobe City	72,905	830	1.2
South Gippsland	26,830	155	0.6
Wellington	41,998	407	1.0
Total	250,846	3136	1.25

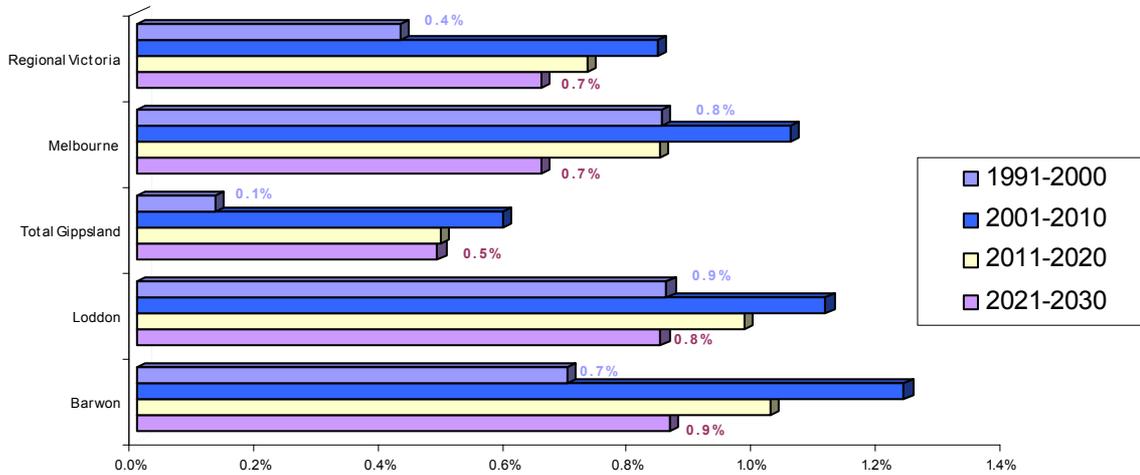
Source: ABS Cat. No. 3218.0 Regional Population Growth Australia

FIGURE 1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA POPULATION 1981– 2006



Source: Census Data 1981-2001

FIGURE 2 POPULATION GROWTH 1991– 2000 TO 2011– 2020

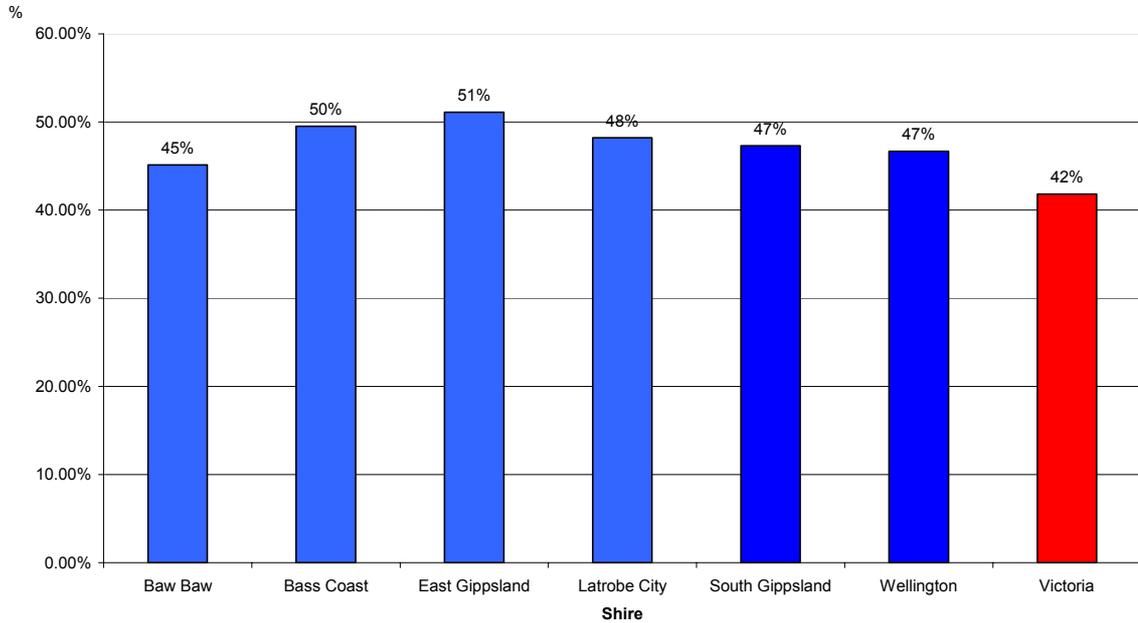


Source: Victoria in Future (VIF) 2004 Population Projections

The demographics of the population of Gippsland result in the region facing some special needs in terms of transport and transport services. These features are described below.

The growth in population of the Gippsland region as a whole up until 2001 has been significantly less than other regional areas of Victoria and Melbourne and less than the average for regional Victoria. However, from 2001–2006 all areas in Gippsland have experienced positive population growth. This has helped the region to achieve an average annual population growth rate of nearly one per cent. This is still lower than the average for Victoria and Melbourne, and some of the other regions. Indeed, this trend of low growth rates relative to some of the other areas within the State is projected to continue in the forecast period. These projections are shown in Figure 2 above. A lower rate of population growth relative to other areas in Victoria results in Gippsland facing greater challenges in meeting requirements for some State funding initiatives which are based on population levels.

FIGURE 3 PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION EARNING LESS THAN \$400 PER WEEK

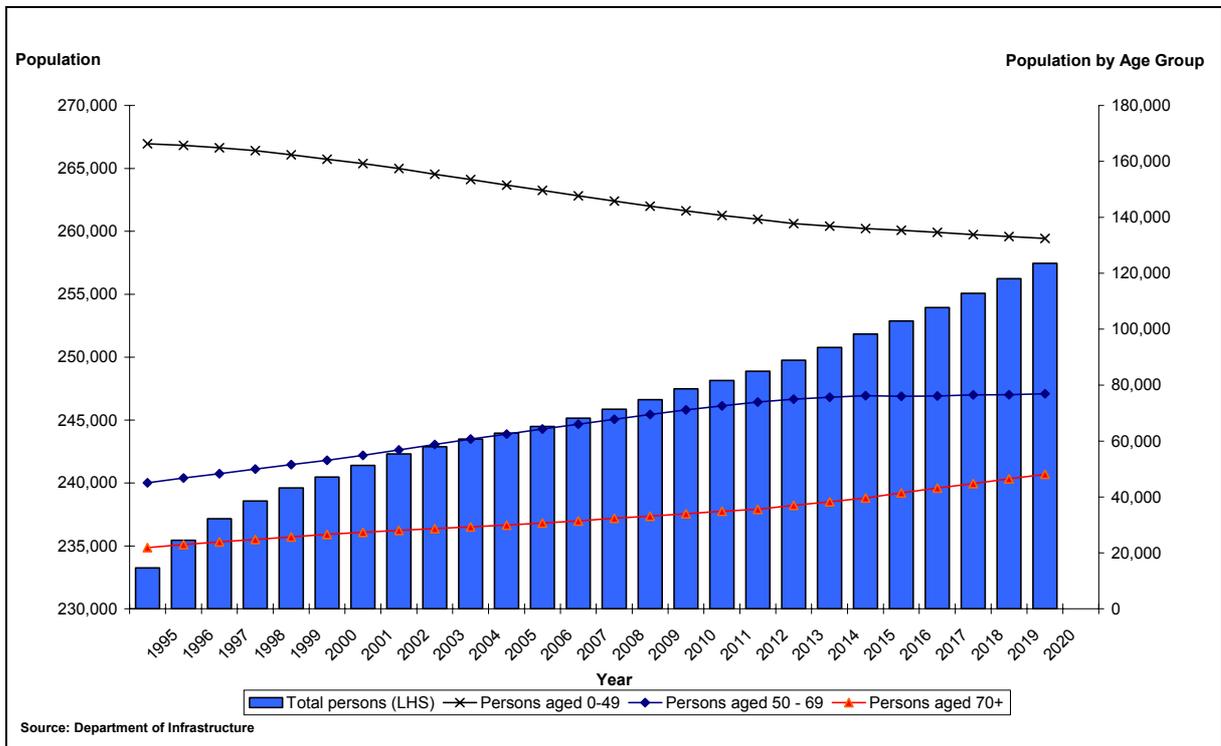


Source: 2001 Census Data

A higher proportion of Gippsland’s working population earns less than \$400 per week than the Victorian average that is shown in red in Figure 3. While every LGA falls below the Victorian average, the LGAs of East Gippsland, Bass Coast, and Latrobe City fare particularly poorly. This demographic feature is likely to impact on the need for public transport services, placing greater demand on the transportation systems.

Gippsland is also facing a dramatic change in its population base, with a significant ageing of the population. As shown in Figure 4, the population of those under 50 is currently declining, whilst the proportion of people aged over 50 is rising. The projections incorporated into this figure also indicate that these changes are expected to continue into the future. An ageing population places demands on the transport network and transport services within the region. As the population ages, it will become more reliant on health services within and outside of the region, putting a greater pressure on public transport services and taxis.

FIGURE 4 POPULATION BY AGE GROUP 1995– 2020



Another important demographic feature of Gippsland is the temporary growth in the population in holiday periods, particularly in January and Easter and during Phillip Island Grand Prix events. For example, an average of 735,000 overnight and 987,000 domestic day visitors visited the Bass Coast from 2004 to 2007¹. Also being home to a number of world class events and natural attractions, eight per cent of Australians and 23 per cent of Victorians (aged 14 years+) indicated that they would like to visit the Gippsland region in the next two years². These population immigrations place a significant burden particularly on the road infrastructure.

1.3.2 Main Population Centres

The population centres of greater than 500 people in each of the LGAs are listed in Table 2. The main regional centres are Warragul, Wonthaggi, Leongatha, Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale. Although populations have traditionally amassed in these centres, there is a new trend of population growth in the smaller towns of Gippsland, especially in the coastal regions, resulting in new transport and transport system considerations.

¹ Tourism research Australia website: <http://www.tra.australia.com/regional> accessed 15 July 2008

² Tourism Victoria website *Gippsland Market Profile Year Ending December 2007* <http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures/domestic-visitation/> accessed 15 July 2008

TABLE 2 GIPPSLAND POPULATION AND REGIONAL CENTRES OVER 1,000 RESIDENTS

Centre	Population [♦]	LGA	Centre	Population [♦]	LGA
Wonthaggi	6529	Bass Coast	Traralgon	21960	Latrobe
Inverloch	3679	Bass Coast	Moe-Newborough	15582	Latrobe
Cowes	4215	Bass Coast	Morwell	13399	Latrobe
Newhaven	1662	Bass Coast	Churchill	4588	Latrobe
San Remo	1017	Bass Coast	Yallourn North	1159	Latrobe
Warragul	11498	Baw Baw	Leongatha	4504	South Gippsland
Drouin	6858	Baw Baw	Korumburra	3146	South Gippsland
Trafalgar	2301	Baw Baw	Mirboo North	1498	South Gippsland
			Foster	1040	South Gippsland
Bairnsdale	11282	East Gippsland			
Lakes Entrance	5548	East Gippsland	Sale	13336	Wellington
Paynesville	3458	East Gippsland	Maffra	4149	Wellington
Orbost	2097	East Gippsland	Yarram	1715	Wellington
			Heyfield	1461	Wellington
			Stratford	1440	Wellington
			Rosedale	1077	Wellington

*2006 Census figures

1.3.3 Social Infrastructure

Education, Health and Aged Care Services

Approximately 70 secondary and tertiary educational facilities are located across Gippsland. Monash University has a campus in Churchill. The University of Melbourne's McMillan Campus, located at Warragul, specialises in agricultural degree courses. TAFE campuses offering vocational education courses are located at centres throughout Gippsland.

Gippsland has access to health and aged care services across the region. Major regional hospitals in Gippsland are located in Warragul, Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale. District hospitals exist in most major centres (Table 3).

TABLE 3 GIPPSLAND HEALTH AND AGED CARE FACILITIES

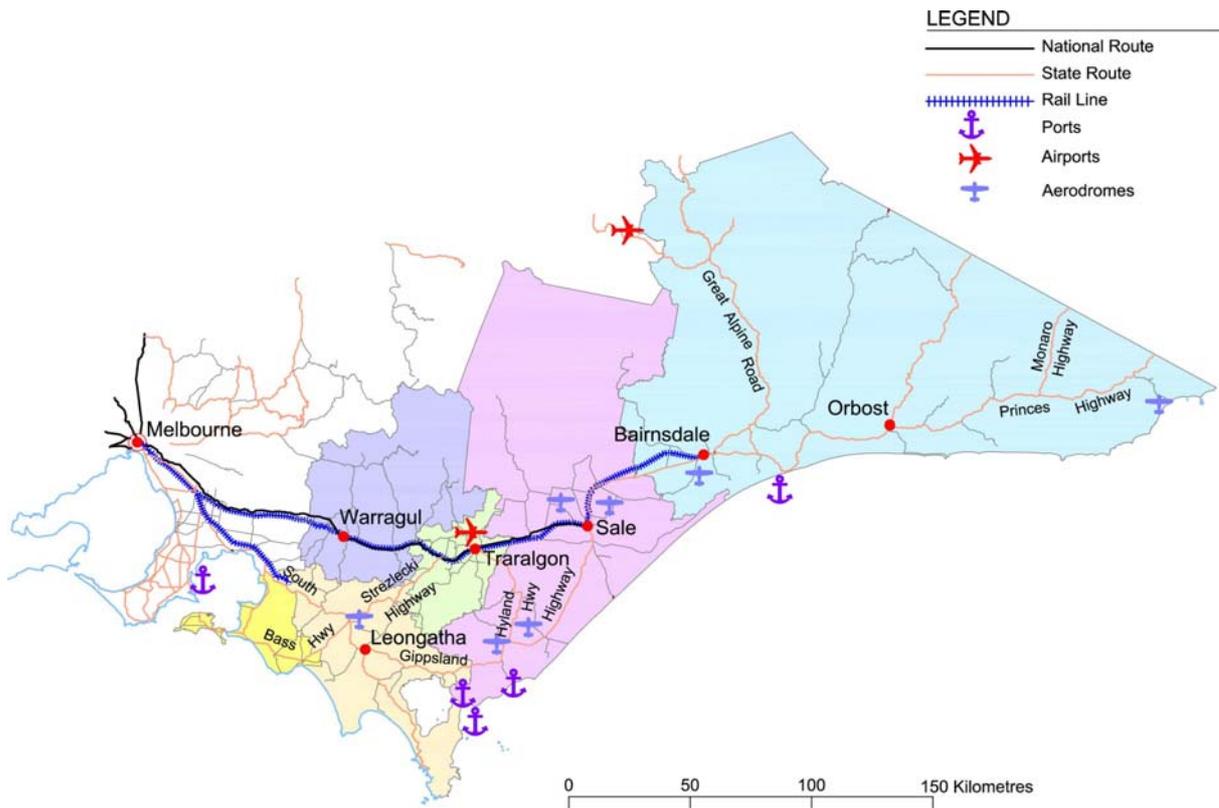
Location	Facility	LGA
Sale	Central Gippsland Health Services	Wellington
Rosedale	Rosedale & District Community Health Centre Inc	Wellington
Maffra	Central Gippsland Health Services	Wellington
Heyfield	Heyfield hospital	Wellington
Yarram	Yarram District Health Service	Wellington
Neerim South	Neerim District Health Service	Baw Baw
Trafalgar	Andrews House	Baw Baw
Warragul	Cooinda Lodge	Baw Baw
Warragul	West Gippsland Hospital	Baw Baw
Drouin	Baw Baw Health & Community Centre	Baw Baw
Warragul and a satellite service at Trafalgar	Community Services Centre	Baw Baw
Rawson	Rawson Community Health Centre	Baw Baw
Wonthaggi	Wonthaggi Hospital	Bass Coast
Inverloch	Inverloch community care centre	Bass Coast
San Remo	Griffiths point lodge hostel	Bass Coast
Bairnsdale, Churchill, Korumburra, Moe, Morwell, Sale, Traralgon, Warragul	Latrobe Community Health Service (LCHS)	n.a
Maryvale	Private Hospital	Latrobe
Traralgon West	Latrobe regional hospital	Latrobe
Omeo	Omeo district hospital (Omeo District Health)	East Gippsland
Orbost	Orbost Hospital	East Gippsland
Bairnsdale	Bairnsdale Regional Hospital	East Gippsland
Leongatha	Leongatha hospital	South Gippsland
Korumburra	Korumburra Hospital	South Gippsland
Foster	South Gippsland Hospital	South Gippsland

Source: <http://www.gha.net.au/ydhs/>

2. SUPPLY OF THE NETWORK

Figure 5 provides an overview of the transport network in the Gippsland Region. The region is serviced by road, rail, air and sea infrastructure. The extent of this transport network is described in this section.

FIGURE 5 GIPPSLAND REGION MAJOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE



2.1.1 Roads

The Gippsland road network is comprised of a combination of state and locally managed roads.

In Figure 5 it can be seen that the Princes Highway (M1 to Traralgon and A1 east of Traralgon) traverses the study region from east to west and acts as the main spine for the region. Connections to the north-east of the State across the Great Dividing Range are provided by the Great Alpine Road (B500) originating at Bairnsdale. The Monaro (Cann Valley) Highway (B23) originates in Cann River and provides an alternative route to the M1 into NSW and the ACT. Heading south from the M1, the South Gippsland Highway (A440) originating in Sale, the Hyland Highway originating in Traralgon and the Strzelecki Highway (B460) originating in Morwell, all service the south-east of the Region. The Bass Highway (A420) provides the connection between the A440 and Phillip Island in the east and the B460.

Given the size of Gippsland, there is understandably a plethora of arterial roads, which provide strategic connections within the region.

2.1.2 Rail

A broad gauge (5 foot 3 inch or 1.6 metre) line runs from Melbourne to Bairnsdale and is used for both passenger and freight trains. The line is formally owned by VicTrack; a Victorian State Government rail track owner. The track was leased under a 49 year franchise/lease to Pacific National (PN) who had responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the line. In return PN had operating rights and operate the freight services over the Gippsland line. In 2007 the Victorian Government brought back the lease from PN and V/Line now is responsible for maintenance, upkeep and providing access to the line.

Major passenger rail stations on the route are located at Warragul, Moe, Morwell, Traralgon, Sale and Bairnsdale. V/Line Passenger Corporation operates a passenger rail service between Melbourne and Bairnsdale. This entity is fully owned and operated by the Victorian Government. The Victorian Government has invested in upgrading the tracks between Melbourne and Traralgon as part of the Regional Fast Rail project. Regional Fast Rail services began operating in 2006.

The only rail freight currently handled by rail is export logs from Bairnsdale and Morwell to Geelong and paper from the Maryvale Mill (Morwell) to Melbourne for export and interstate. There are no open access operating terminals in which to load in Gippsland. Logs and paper are loaded at private facilities.

Road–rail freight terminals are located at Bairnsdale and the Gippsland Logistics Precinct at Morwell. This remains effectively moribund at present, but significant efforts to resurrect the facility are being actively fostered by the City of Latrobe in conjunction with V/Line and the Victorian Government.

Coupled with the Gippsland Logistics Precinct is the proposal to develop an East Gippsland intermodal freight terminal at Bairnsdale. This proposal was put to the State Government as an integral part of a funding application to develop the Park in 2002. The Government did not fund the intermodal freight proposal at that time but VicTrack did invest substantial funds to construct the necessary spur line to accommodate the loading of timber.

A broad gauge line exists between Dandenong and Leongatha. This route is presently used for suburban passenger traffic as far as Cranbourne.

2.1.3 Sea

Gippsland has modest port facilities at:

- Lakes Entrance – principally serving fishing, supply vessels working for oil companies, small boat slipping and recreational boating
- Port Welshpool – serving fishing vessels and small island trading ships of shallow draft, with a long jetty recently decommissioned for traffic and a small RO–RO berth and hard stand
- Barry Beach – used by Esso to supply and support its offshore oil platforms. Land adjacent to the facility is being developed by the private sector for enhanced port facilities.
- Port Albert, south of Yarram – providing recreational and commercial fishing, mooring and ramp facilities.

- Port Franklin, south of Foster in South Gippsland – providing a safe harbour for fishing and boating.

The Port of Hastings at Westernport is outside the study area but its presence as a major bulk liquids port and its role as Victoria’s second container port, also impacts on this study.

2.1.4 Air

The Gippsland Region is serviced by a number of regional aerodromes at Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Great Lakes (Kepper Field), Orbost, Sale and Yarram for charter and scenic flights. Latrobe Regional Airport in Morwell also offers flying training in addition to these services. As well as providing a flight school and aircraft maintenance, Leongatha Airport is important for agricultural spraying and provides the only landing facility for South Gippsland’s air ambulance. Australia’s only manufacturer of light aircraft operates from the Latrobe Regional Airport’s industrial precinct.

Characteristics and services offered by the airport and aerodromes of Gippsland are outlined in Table 4.

The Gippsland region is serviced by Tullamarine and Essendon airports as well as NSW airports for international passenger and freight movements.

There is currently no national passenger or international air freight airports closer to the region and East of Melbourne in the Cardinia, Casey, Bass Coast local government areas.

The Victorian Government recently announced funding contribution to an upgrade of Malacoota airport in East Gippsland. This upgrade will involve:

- Installing pilot-activated runway lighting to enable 24-hour operation
- Sealing the runways, taxiways and aircraft parking apron
- Installing a permanent re-fuelling facility
- Expanding the terminal and facilities.

TABLE 4 CHARACTERISTICS AND SERVICES OF AIRPORTS/AERODROMES IN GIPPSLAND

Airport /Aerodrome	Runway	Taxiways	Apron	Terminal	Services
West Sale	Main Runway 1527x30m sealed + 2nd Runway + Cross Runways	Part parallel and connecting	Sealed aprons	Yes	Charter services, flight training, engine and aircraft maintenance and air ambulance services
East Sale Yarram (Parkside)	1090x30m unsealed and 756x18m sealed	-	Gravel Apron	-	Services RAAF Charter services, and ultralight training

Airport /Aerodrome	Runway	Taxiways	Apron	Terminal	Services
Latrobe Regional	Main Runway 1440x23m sealed +2nd 919*18m runway Pilot activated lighting on main runway	7-15m wide and mostly sealed	Mostly sealed part gravel	Yes	Three flying training schools Aircraft Manufacture and Maintenance Fuel Available 24/7 Avgas and Jet A DSE Firebomber base Helimed Centre SES and CFA
Bairnsdale	Main runway 1101x30m with central 18m sealed 2nd runway 850x18m	-	-	-	Air ambulance and maintenance
Great Lakes (Kepper Field)	Main Runway 08/26 bitumen 18m x 1180 m 2 nd runway gravel 18m x 670 m	-	-	Yes	Concrete hardstand for turbine and transport category aircraft off taxiway at Western end of runway 08/26. Observation platform. Hangars available for all categories of aircraft.
Lakes Entrance	-	-	-	-	-
Orbost	-	-	-	-	-
Leongatha	Main runway 924x18m sealed 2nd runway 669x18m unsealed	-	-	-	Flight school, aircraft maintenance
Mallacoota	Main runway 1028x30m and 881x30m to be sealed	-	-	-	-
Phillip Island	Main Runway 600m 2nd runway 530m both unsealed	-	-	-	Charter and Scenic Flights as well as pilot training.

2.1.5 Public Transport services

V/Line provides a number of rail and bus services within and into and out of the region. It services four main routes within Gippsland:

1. Melbourne to Bairnsdale via Dandenong, Pakenham, Warragul, Traralgon and Sale, by rail and coach with further V/Line connections at Trafalgar servicing Heyfield and Maffra
2. Melbourne to Lake Tyers Beach via Sale, Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance, by coach
3. Melbourne to Yarram via Dandenong, Lang Lang and Leongatha, by coach
4. Melbourne to Cowes via Dandenong, Lang Lang and Inverloch, by coach.

In addition, V/Line buses travel through and stop within the Gippsland region on their interstate services to Batemans Bay and Canberra.

A number of local public transport services also provide intra-regional connections.

A ferry operates between Stony Point and Cowes on a daily basis. A barge operates at Corinella to transport passengers, cars and stock to French Island. A regular car ferry service also runs between Raymond Island and Paynesville.

There have been numerous enhancements made to the nature and quantity of public transport services made available to residents of Gippsland since June 2005. Highlights include:

- Increased frequency and improved timetabling on Morwell–Churchill, Moe–Morwell–Traralgon and Boolarra–Churchill routes in response to Latrobe Valley access and mobility action plan
- New and/or improved services to Wilson’s Promontory, Maffra, Lakes Entrance and Drouin
- New V/Line timetabling introduced 15 October 2006, resulting in the delivery of many new services
- A reduction in the fares for V/Line rail and bus services with some customers receiving a 20 per cent saving
- New interchange facilities at Anderson, Bairnsdale, Cowes, Lang Lang, Leongatha, Morwell, Sale and Warragul
- New facilities have been installed at 32 primary and secondary schools throughout the Gippsland region as part of the first stage of the rural school bus program
- New local public transport arrangements have been or are being established as a consequence of joint State/Local Government ‘Transport Connection’ programs made possible via \$18.3 million fund set up by the State Government.

In addition, the State Government has recently announced a \$14.7 million upgrade to transport services in South Gippsland and the Bass Coast. A public consultation period will precede the introduction of various coach and bus service upgrades.

Currently road, rail, air and, to a lesser extent, sea modes are utilised for passenger transport movements within Gippsland and to access other regions. It is likely that these modes will remain predominant methods of travel for the life of this strategy. However, with changing demographic, environmental and social pressures there may be the need to strengthen the mass-transit movement of people into and out of Gippsland to access economic opportunities. Enhancing the capacity of the current network and services will be of first priority however the concept of a light monorail system which would provide a dedicated passenger transport link between Bairnsdale and Melbourne has also been mooted to further extend the mass transport services for the region.

A number of intra-regional public transport issues have been raised in the course of this update. These include:

- the lack of inter town connectivity for commuters, people needing to get between areas within Gippsland for their employment, education, retail, social and medical purposes Current levels of bus services between Cranbourne Yarram and Wonthaggi to Traralgon
- Ensuring connectivity between regional bus service timetables and rail connections

3. FUNDING STRATEGIES

3.1 Summary

Since 2005 the funding of transport infrastructure and services in Australia has changed focus, particularly at a Commonwealth level. The priorities and underpinnings of AusLink are being re-focused with a change of Government at the Federal Level and the advent of Infrastructure Australia. State Government means such as VicRoads, funding through Regional Development Victoria and public transport funding, is being extended and reshaped. There is a new focus on the ideas of supply chains, transport networks, productivity benefits, safety, sustainability (including good governance) and collaboration.

This section examines the principal funding sources available to local governments for infrastructure and transport related purposes. Since the production of the previous strategy the new body of Infrastructure Australia provides a new opportunity for Gippsland to mark its needs and priorities on a national stage. Furthermore, the extended programs under the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund and Better Roads Victoria also present new opportunities for the region.

3.2 National Considerations

3.2.1 Future vision, policy objectives and principles

The Australian Transport Council is the Ministerial forum for Commonwealth, State and Territory consultations and provides advice to governments on the coordination and integration of all transport and road policy issues at a national level. On Friday 2 May 2008, ATC held a meeting to discuss Australia's transport future and issues, which led to Ministers agreeing on the transport's future vision and policy objectives and principles.

The vision enunciated at this meeting was:

Australia requires a safe, secure, efficient, reliable and integrated national transport system that supports and enhances our nation's economic development and social and environmental well-being.

To achieve this vision, Australia's Transport Ministers committed to the following policy objectives related to transport:

1. To promote the efficient movement of people and goods in order to support sustainable economic development and prosperity
2. To provide a safe transport system that meets Australia's mobility, social and economic objectives with maximum safety for its user
3. To protect our environment and improve health by building and investing transport systems that minimise emissions and consumption of resources and energy
4. To promote effective and efficient integration and linkage of Australia's transport system with urban and regional planning at every level of government and with international transport systems
5. Transparency in funding and charging to provide equitable access to the transport system, through clearly identified means where full cost recovery is not applied.

These policy objectives represent Australia's national transport policy directions and goals. Any proposal attempting to secure funding from government agencies would have to be consistent to these objectives.

3.2.2 Infrastructure Australia

Infrastructure Australia was formed by the Commonwealth Government earlier this year. It consists of an advisory council group of 12, with Sir Rod Eddington leading as the Chair. Infrastructure Australia will be responsible for developing a strategic blueprint for Australia's future infrastructure needs and – in partnership with the states, territories, local government and the private sector – facilitate its implementation. The transport sector (and issues impeding its productivity), has been outlined as one of the priorities. The focus of this blueprint will be on addressing long term Australian economic, social, and environmental needs, rather than short term issues.

Infrastructure Australia has been charged with the following tasks:

- Undertake a National Infrastructure Audit of nationally significant infrastructure, including in the areas of water, energy, transport and communications
- Compile an Infrastructure Priority List for presentation to the March 2009 meeting of COAG – a list that will guide future public and private investment decisions, and
- Develop by the end of 2008 a nationally consistent guidelines for public private partnerships.

The objectives of these tasks, although not all directly related to transport, are to

- Tackle inflation and boosting productivity
- Help manufactures, farmers and miners get their goods to market as quickly and cheaply as possible
- Make sure working families no longer have to spend more time commuting to and from work than they do with their children, and
- Ensure all Australians – no matter where they live – can continue to drink clean water from their kitchen taps and have their lights comes on when they flick the switch.

An initial \$20 billion has been allocated to the Building Australia Fund to build critical infrastructure.

The Gippsland region's transport needs are directly related to many of the objectives that Infrastructure Australia is trying to achieve. Gippsland is major supplier of Australia's and Victoria's energy needs. It also produces significant amounts of agricultural commodities. Due to the low population density of Gippsland and the nature of its industry, any costs savings in transportation in this region would represent a boost in productivity and could ease pressure on inflation.

3.2.3 AusLink

AusLink was the pre-eminent policy of the previous Commonwealth Government for roads and rail funding. The key differentiation of AusLink from its predecessors, was the extension of the program into intermodal and rail projects, and in the definitions of national corridors. Perhaps the biggest deviation from earlier programs is the extent of involvement of the private sector in formulating policy under the National Logistics Council established by the Minister. The AusLink program has several funding streams. These include:

- AusLink National Projects – for construction and maintenance of the Land transport network defined in the AusLink National Network

- AusLink Strategic Regional Projects – for construction and maintenance of the Land transport network not included in the AusLink National Network
- AusLink Transport Development and Innovation Projects – for planning and research projects related to the AusLink National Network
- AusLink funding – for Land Transport Research Entities.

3.2.4 AusLink Strategic Regional Projects

AusLink Strategic Regional Projects usually involve regional roads, railways or intermodal facilities that are usually the responsibility of the owner to develop, upgrade or construct. As a result, the Government expects that the relevant local government authority or group of local government authorities, and other interested parties which might benefit from investment in the project, will often contribute to the project.

Under AusLink Strategic Regional Project Funding, there are two sets of project assessment criteria to cover large and small projects.

Criteria for large projects:

Collaborative regional planning *The proposed project arises from demonstrated collaborative regional planning processes. The proposal has achieved wide support, ie from local government, local representatives, industry, regional and community organisations.*

Stakeholder funding contributions *Stakeholder contributions to the project have been secured by the proponent to meet the overall cost of the project.*

Industry competitiveness *The proposal demonstrates how the project enhances the ability of regional industry and communities to compete in the national and global market-place through improved connectivity to export-related transport networks.*

Regional significance *The proposal demonstrates how the project improves regionally significant transport infrastructure.*

Access to services and employment *The proposal demonstrates how the project improves access for regional industry and communities to services and employment.*

Clear construction timelines and relevant construction standards *The proposal provides projected start and finish dates for the project and confirmation that the proponent agrees to meet relevant construction, technical and engineering standards for the project, and provide clear advice on the current status of, and timelines for, the project.*

Criteria for small projects:

Community/regional significance and community support. *The proposal demonstrates improvements to transport infrastructure significant to a local community. The proposal has achieved wide community support, ie., from local government, industry, regional and community organisations.*

Community access/Social significance *The proposal demonstrates improved access for communities to services and employment.*

Safety *The proposal demonstrates improvement to the safety of transport operations.*

Clear construction timelines and relevant construction standards *The proposal provides projected start and finish dates for the project and confirmation that the proponent agrees to meet relevant construction, technical and engineering standards for the project, and provide clear advice on the current status of the project.*

Evidence of partner support (if available)

3.3 State Considerations

3.3.1 Victorian overarching principles

In 2008 the Victorian Government submitted to the Council of Australian Governments its submission to the National Infrastructure Audit to be completed by Infrastructure Australia. In this report Victoria highlighted the following overarching priorities for infrastructure in the State:

1. Transport needs of a growing city: managing transport to reduce congestion, meet demand for public transport and address population growth in the outer suburbs.
2. Freight access, exports and linkages: increasing landside capacity at the Port of Melbourne and facilitating efficient movements of goods from high growth export industries in regional Victoria to ports, airports and other key freight corridors.
3. Water reform projects
4. Telecommunications infrastructure development and market reform
5. Climate change and energy infrastructure.

Of particular relevance to this study was the noting of a number of projects and initiatives which will impact on the GLGN's transport network and connections. The report emphasised the following projects:

- Improvements to connections to satellite towns of Drouin and Warragul
- Consideration of the role and impediment of the South Gippsland Highway
- The role of the desalination plant at Wonthaggi
- Further support for the expansion of renewable energy a key industry area for Gippsland
- Recognition of the potential importance of the development of clean coal technologies
- Infrastructure related to carbon capture and storage
- Provision of infrastructure to assist the transport to market of new industries developing in the Latrobe Valley to transfer goods to market
- Upgrades to port infrastructure to facilitate the movement of heavy machinery and engineering equipment to the Latrobe Valley.

3.4 Regional Infrastructure Development Fund

The Victorian Government through the Regional Development Victoria (RDV) administers this fund. The Fund provides support for capital works in regional communities to:

- support new industry development
- link transport infrastructure
- improve tourism facilities, and to
- better link regional Victoria to new opportunities in education and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) infrastructure.

For eligibility it is required that applications demonstrate how the project meets a significant number of the following criteria:

3.4.1 Economic Criteria

How the proposed project will address:

Attracts investment and complements other investments in the region.

Creates jobs and stimulates regional economic growth.

Facilitate the integration of the region into global markets, including opportunities for export or import replacement.

3.4.2 Socio-economic Criteria

Is the project likely to be:

Supported by local community and industry

Consistent with ecological sustainable development

Built on identified key regional strengths

Providing an adequate social and/or economic return to the community

3.4.3 State and Regional Priority

Does the project meet:

Objectives and key outputs of local or regional economic development strategies

The Victorian Government's stated policy commitments to provincial Victoria

3.4.4 Project Feasibility and Delivery

The application must indicate:

Access to project management experience in both the developmental and operational phases of the project

All legal, land tenure, planning and environmental issues have been identified and resolved (or satisfactory resolution strategies are in place).

Project risks have been identified and strategies in place to manage them.

3.4.5 Financial

Projects should maximise funding support from a range of sources, including Commonwealth and local government, community, private sector and regional organisations. Projects must demonstrate that their viability is not dependent on ongoing funding or continuing government support.

3.4.6 Higher Priority Project Proposals

Applications that are eligible for funding under RIDF guidelines and that meet the eligibility criteria are initially allocated higher or lower priorities. A project is classified as a higher priority project based on:

- Rate highly in terms of demonstrable project benefits related to new employment, investment and exports (or import replacement)
- Provide broad public benefit
- Are sustainable – financially, environmentally and socially in the long term
- Demonstrate financial viability and a strong case for funding
- Are a State or Regional Priority
- Maximise funding support from a range of sources
- Are ready to be implemented.

In implementing the RIDF, the Government has also identified a number of priority initiatives to be considered through the Fund. These current priority initiatives relate to:

- Arts and Cultural Facilities Infrastructure
- Aviation Infrastructure
- Biofuels Infrastructure
- Dairy Farm Gate Infrastructure
- Intermodal Freight Infrastructure
- Local Ports Infrastructure
- Local Roads to Markets Infrastructure
- On Farm Energy Infrastructure
- Pathways Infrastructure
- Rural Showgrounds Infrastructure
- Small Towns Development Infrastructure
- Stock Over/Underpassess Road Infrastructure
- Water for Industry Infrastructure.

4. POTENTIAL PRIORITIES

Through consultation, desktop review and previous studies, a long list of potential priorities has been developed. The sources of these priorities include:

- The previous Gippsland Transport Strategy
- SEATS Network Review
- Timber Industry Road Evaluation Study (TIRES)
- Various submissions by the Gippsland Local Government Network to reviews and investigations related to transport
- High Country Council Tourism Network Study.

4.1 Gippsland Transport Strategy 2005

As a first step the status of the priorities listed in the G2005 Gippsland Transport Strategy were reviewed to determine currency to the current and future challenges and opportunities that Gippsland as a region faces. The outcomes of this review are listed in Table 5.

TABLE 5 REVIEW OF 2005 GIPPSLAND TRANSPORT STRATEGY PRIORITIES

Issue	Project/Initiative	Currency
The Local Road and Bridge Network	Coordinate a full inventory of bridges and roads to improve priority setting for freight local connectors across the region.	The importance of this initiative is amplified by COAG commitment to implementation of performance based standards (PBS) or high productivity heavy vehicles. The COAG agreement requires all States and Territories to declare their networks according to PBS classifications. The proposed GLGN inventory of bridges and roads is aligned to meeting this requirement. Classifying roads and bridges according to PBS applications will highlight where bridge inadequacies are the only impediment to establishment of an otherwise viable route. This transparency will enhance the prospects of gaining funding support to remedy ‘missing links’ in the infrastructure network.
Poor access to public transport services within the Region	Initiating a whole of Gippsland Regional Accessibility Council (whose representatives would include key members of the LGAs, transport providers and VLine) with the responsibility of identifying issues and	Although a whole of region Accessibility Council has not been initiated there have been numerous enhancements made to the nature and quantity of public transport services made available to residents of Gippsland since June 2005. Highlights include: Increased frequency and improved timetabling on Morwell – Churchill, Moe-Morwell-Traralgon and Boolarra-Churchill routes in response to Latrobe Valley access and mobility action plan. New and/or improved services to Wilson’s Prom, Maffra,

Issue	Project/Initiative	Currency
	<p>progressing solutions to public transport access issues within the region.</p>	<p>Lakes Entrance and Drouin.</p> <p>New V-line timetable was introduced on 15 October 2006, delivery many new services.</p> <p>In addition, V-line fares have been reduced, with some customers receiving a 20% saving.</p> <p>New interchange facilities at Anderson, Bairnsdale, Cowes, Lang Lang, Leongatha, Morwell, Sale and Warragul</p> <p>New facilities have been installed at 32 primary and secondary schools throughout the Gippsland region as part of the first stage of the rural school bus program</p> <p>New local public transport arrangements have been or are being established as a consequence of joint State/Local Government 'Transport Connections' programs made possible via \$18.3m fund set up by the State government.</p> <p>In addition, the State Government has recently announced a \$14.7 million upgrade to transport services in South Gippsland and the Bass Coast. A public consultation period will precede the introduction of various coach and bus service upgrades</p>
<p>Rail Gauge Incompatibility</p>	<p>Initiate advocacy to State and Federal Governments for the provision of a standardised rail gauge from Bairnsdale to Melbourne</p>	<p>Rail gauge servicing Gippsland remains broad gauge. The likelihood that rail lines will be converted to 'standard' gauge remains low.</p> <p>The gauge of the metropolitan rail network on which V-line services originate is the constraint on gauge conversion for the Gippsland line and a number of other lines that service intrastate Victoria.</p>
<p>Opportunities for heavy vehicle productivity enhancements</p>	<p>Commence discussions to implement a set of weighbridges in the far east of the study region, possibly as a demonstration project</p>	<p>There is no evidence of any action on this initiative however with the implementation of 'chain of responsibility' provisions in Victorian road transport law are having a considerable positive (reducing) effect on the incidence of heavy vehicle overloads.</p> <p>National reforms being piloted at present potentially provide a better solution. What is required is a proposal built on a package of PBS (to ensure safety of vehicles when operating at higher mass), IAP (to ensure route compliance), incremental mass distance charging arrangements (including hypothecation of revenues and arrangements for self declaration of mass and verification of mass at point of unloading e.g. Midway terminal at</p>

Issue	Project/Initiative	Currency
		Geelong) and CoR to ensure all parties have comparable duties to seek compliance and therefore have an incentive to work together.
Lack of External Car Ferry Services	Develop, with a valid proponent, a vehicular ferry option to connect the Mornington Peninsula and Phillip Island – the missing link of the Victorian Coastal Route	Initial work was completed to further assess the feasibility of this link. There remains further work to be completed prior to development of this initiative.
Access and Infrastructure for Intermodal Terminals in the Region	Access and Infrastructure for the Gippsland Logistics Precinct (Morwell) and Bairnsdale intermodal facilities	<p>Gippsland Logistics Precinct terminal infrastructure has not been maintained and is now in need of some work in order to bring back up to operational standard. Improved rail access to and from the terminal was established as part of the RFR project but has not been commissioned or used. The Latrobe City Council is negotiating with interested parties to reopen the terminal as soon as possible.</p> <p>The council has purchased land adjacent to the site and is encouraging the development of a freight and logistics cluster.</p> <p>Log loading and train movements from Bairnsdale continue to operate (70,000–100,000 tpa). Encouraging greater intermodal operations in East Gippsland is required with the advent of new mineral explorations in the region.</p>
Poor north-south linkages between the Princes Highway and Southern Gippsland	Strzelecki Highway Upgrade and minor widening to Korumburra–Warragul road	This initiative remains outstanding.
Movement of quarry products	Analysis of the efficient logistics options facing them and the social/public costs associated with moving material by road alone	It remains the case that Gippsland hosts significant quarry product resources that are, with the passage of time, becoming increasingly attractive to Melbourne based users.
Lack of modal choice into and out of South Gippsland	Ensure any development of the South Gippsland Rail Line for passenger includes consideration of the	All indications are that the rail line to Leongatha will not be re-opened. Instead, in the 2008–09 State Budget provision has been made for \$14.7 million investment in new bus services. The provision made is expected to pay

Issue	Project/Initiative	Currency
	requirements of rail freight, including gauging and land reservation requirements at Leongatha.	for new links from Leongatha, Wonthaggi and Inverloch to Pakenham and a new corridor between Koo-Wee-Rup and Pakenham.
Lack Of Deep Sea Port Facilities	Barry Point Facility Development	<p>It remains the case that the draught limitations applicable to corner inlet constrain the future possible development of the Barry Point Facility. The constraint this poses on the region is critically linked to the on-going viability of rail services to port of Geelong (to facilitate woodchip exports) and whether provision is made to connect Gippsland to the Port of Hastings via rail. Current operations demonstrate the viability of exporting woodchips from east Gippsland through the port of Geelong. It is only if the existing rail services cease to remain viable that there is a credible threat to the future large scale establishment of plantation estates in the region. Quite apart from this, given the expansion of the Maryvale mill, more timber resources will be value added locally.</p> <p>Without significant dredging of corner inlet, the Barry Point facility will never be suitable for large scale exports of products that are derivatives of the significant brown coal resources in the region.</p> <p>Use of the Barry Point facility to accommodate barges carrying large pre-fabricated components or machinery (e.g. parts of the UREA plant) has been mooted as providing an alternative to road closures on the Princes Highway to accommodate such over size over mass movements by road from the Port of Melbourne. GLGN's observation is that this can occur without any further significant investment in port related infrastructure. Nevertheless, a route from the Barry Point Facility to respective sites would need to be determined. It is conceivable that a number of townships would be impacted.</p>
Impediments on the Coastal Route	Recognition of the strategic importance of the route to Tourism development	Melbourne – Sydney coastal routes main priorities were specified in the 2005 study as South Gippsland, Bass Highways and Pakenham bypass (which has subsequently been completed).
Capacity on the Princes Highway	Dual Highway from Traralgon to Sale and	Duplication of Princes Highway between Traralgon and Sale is a AusLink project. \$1.2 million has been allocated

Issue	Project/Initiative	Currency
between Traralgon and Bairnsdale	Bairnsdale	to undertake initial planning for the upgrade of the Princes Highway East to a four lane, dual carriageway freeway between Traralgon and Sale. At this stage, the Federal Governments committed contribution to the duplication is \$140 million. Planning is expected to commence in mid 2008 with construction expected to commence in 2011.
Poor Southern Gippsland and Phillip Island Linkages	Bass Highway and Phillip Island Tourist Rd improvements. Nyora St Helier Rd Improvement	Ensuring that these links meet the needs of the tourism industry remains a priority.
Regulatory issues for school bus system	Allowing multi-use of school bus infrastructure in remote rural areas	It is understood this is being progressed as part of the transport connections program
Rail Bridge Issues	Feasibility studies to improve Stratford rail bridge	Capacity and structural integrity of rail bridge between Sale and Bairnsdale ('Stratford') still remains an issue.
Heavy vehicle traffic through the centre of Bairnsdale	Bairnsdale truck bypass	Further background studies have been completed and this remains a priority for the region.
Heavy vehicle traffic through the centre of Sale	Sale truck bypass and associated works	Further background studies have been completed and this remains a priority for the region.
Gauge issues into Melbourne	Ensure 3rd line to Dandenong is standard gauge	The progress of the Dandenong triplification is currently uncertain.
Future traffic volumes through Traralgon	Traralgon bypass	The Victorian Government has confirmed the route for the Traralgon bypass, in the state's south-east. The decision is to proceed with the northern bypass route, which skirts the Princes Highway on Traralgon's outskirts. Moves are now being made to reserve the bypass route in the planning scheme. The northern bypass route will support future mining ventures and will prevent residential growth in the area.
Connections to the Sydney Market	Princes Highway improvements (Lakes Entrance to border)	This issue remains a concern however VicRoads has been undertaking work to improve this connection.
Connections to the	Monaro Highway	This issue remains a concern however VicRoads has been

Issue	Project/Initiative	Currency
ACT and NSW regional market	Improvements	undertaking work to improve this connection.
Rail Gauge issues into Victoria's second container port	Improve connectivity to Westernport	There remains uncertainty surrounding how cost effective and efficient rail access will be provided to port of Hastings in the future despite numerous studies. It remains a strategic objective of GLGN to ensure that provision is made for direct rail access to Port of Hastings from Gippsland particularly in the light of the growing freight task originating in the region which may be best suited for Hastings.
Poor North-south Links to Northeastern Victoria	Ongoing improvements to the Great Alpine Road	The ongoing need for this initiative was highlighted in the High Country Tourism network study.
Intersections of public and private roads	Improve intersections of public and private routes	The Regional Infrastructure Development Fund has targeted this issue with particular emphasis on dairy routes.
The Potential for Grand Ridge Road to be Developed as a Tourism Icon	Analyse the full benefit-cost of improving Grand Ridge Road to a 'must do' tourist drive compared to other suggested tourism improvements such as development of the Midland Highway	<p>In late 2006 the Federal Government committed to a program of funding totally \$26.7 million for 52 land transport projects worth \$43 million. The 'AusLink Strategic Regional Programme' was designed to assist councils develop regional and local transport infrastructure supporting industry, tourism and economic development, while also offering assistance to improve access and sustainability for rural areas.</p> <p>Projects funded under the Strategic Regional Programme sit between the AusLink National Network of interstate road and rail links and its assistance to councils for local roads under the AusLink Roads to Recovery Programme. \$900,000 was provided to Baw Baw LGA to fund an upgrade to Grand Ridge Road. The total estimated cost of the proposed upgrade was \$1.3 million, meaning that Baw Baw LGA needed to provide \$400,000 of funding from other sources.</p>
Road signage Issues	Improve Signage and consistency of signage	There has been no known action on this initiative.
Disbursement of tourist events across the region	Growing Gippsland Tourism Events	There has been no known action on this initiative.

Issue	Project/Initiative	Currency
Current and future demands on regional aerodromes	Ensuring aerodromes meets current and future demands	<p>The recent upgrade announcement of Mallacoota aerodrome indicates that the State Government is working with the region to ensure that aerodromes meet current and future demands for both passenger and freight.</p> <p>In 2007 Latrobe Regional Airport received a Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) grant, which provides a 50% contribution to the development of a \$984,000 aviation business park at Latrobe Regional Airport. The development involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Relocating power and water supplies and constructing an access road to enable Gippsland Aeronautics' consolidation on a single site, and extra private hangar space •Developing four commercial lots to facilitate the opening of two flying schools •Providing gas mains, extending sewerage services, drainage and a taxi lane to service the DSE firebase •Creating a new emergency access road and sealing the airport apron.
Lack of southern access to Mount Baw Baw	Seal Baw Baw South Face Road	The ongoing need for this initiative was highlighted in the High Country Tourism network study.

4.2 SEATS Strategic Network

In 2007, SEATS members including the Gippsland Local Government Network developed a strategic network for the region based on the transport infrastructure in question meeting at least three of the criteria below.

The link or infrastructure must be:

1. Essential to the internal connectivity between at least two local government areas within the SEATS Region
2. A strategic point of intermodal transfer
3. Essential to the efficient operation of domestic and international markets
4. A strategic route for two or more major industries in the SEATS region
5. Essential to mitigate relative poor transport accessibility issues in the SEATS region
6. Supported financially and politically by more than one level of government and/or a significant private sector involvement
7. Essential to the transport amenity of the SEATS transport community.

The Strategic Network that was determined by this process represents a hierarchy of the region's infrastructure assets from the strategic network to regionally strategic routes. The Strategic Network is the infrastructure that the SEATS region relies on, but does not indicate its relative effectiveness.

The Strategic Network provided a collective focus for SEATS' transport infrastructure planning. It was designed to be used as a planning and funding tool by member local governments, regional groups, state governments, the private sector and the Federal Government. Its use is expected to encourage investment in SEATS because it will promote projects that go beyond the confines of singular local governments and provide benefits to the whole of the region, and indeed, to Victoria, NSW and ACT.

The following links comprise the SEATS Strategic Network.

SEATS STRATEGIC NETWORK

Links	Links
Princes Highway	South Gippsland Highway
Monaro Highway	Picton Road
Moss Vale-Sydney Rail	Port of Melbourne
Bomaderry-Sydney Rail	Port of Hastings
Melbourne-Bairnsdale Rail	Port of Eden
Strzelecki Highway	Port of Port Kembla
Federal Highway	Latrobe Intermodal Facility
Barton Highway	Moss Vale Intermodal Facility
Snowy Mountains Highway	Dandenong Intermodal Facility
Illawara Highway	Cranbourne Intermodal Facility
The Hume Freeway	Moss Vale-Port Kembla Rail
Kings Highway	

As well as defining the Strategic Network, SEATS considered and defined the key requirements to maintain and improve the network and to identify its gaps and needs. There were sixteen initiatives put forward to improve routes and infrastructure on the Strategic Network. Those with direct relevance to the current study are listed in Table 6.

TABLE 6 CHARACTERISTICS AND SERVICES OF AIRPORTS/AERODROMES IN GIPPSLAND

Asset	Recommendation
South East Australian Transport Strategy	Develop a South East Australian Transport Strategy
Recognition of the Princes Highway under AusLink and related projects	A number of projects that have been put forward in previous studies need to be re-prioritised given the strategic importance of the Princes Highway to the whole of South East Australia. These projects include: Dual highway from Traralgon to Sale and Bairnsdale East Traralgon Bypass

Asset	Recommendation
	<p>Truck bypasses of Bairnsdale and Sale</p> <p>Upgrades between Bairnsdale and the NSW border</p>
Port of Hastings and associated road and rail infrastructure	The largest need — or real infrastructure gap — in the region is appropriate road and rail links to this port through Dandenong and the broader Gippsland region.
Dandenong Triplification	The triplification of the Dandenong rail line is highlighted in Meeting Our Transport Challenges and is commended by SEATS. It is the hope of the SEATS region that this project will improve passenger and or freight access into the urban Melbourne area. However with such a project, significant disruption to services could occur and this would be likely to impact upon current passenger and freight rail service levels.
Bass Highway Upgrades	It is a high priority project of SEATS to ensure that the improvements within the VicRoads Bass Highway Strategy document are progressed as soon as possible.
Great Alpine Road upgrades	Continued support for ongoing improvements to the Great Alpine Road and the Snowy Mountains Highway to improve safety and efficiency is recommended.
Snowy Mountain upgrades	
Monaro Highway improvements in NSW and Victoria	Ensuring that the full link of the Monaro provides adequate capacity now and into the future will ensure a coordinated approach between all levels of Government. Ensuring that the link provides adequate capacity to Goulburn is of particular importance. There are also key upgrades required to the link north of the NSW border.
Strzelecki Highway upgrades	The VicRoads <i>Strzelecki Highway Management Study</i> provides a framework for development of this route, which should be adhered to and updated accordingly.
Cranbourne Bypass of South Gippsland Highway	The City of Casey is actively promoting traffic travelling on the South Gippsland Highway to bypass Cranbourne High Street. A more concrete solution in the form of a bypass of the Cranbourne is required to effectively deal with the issues of growth in urban density, increased traffic signals affecting traffic flow and increased heavy vehicle traffic proportions. It is recommended that the Cranbourne bypass of South Gippsland Highway be developed post haste.
Intermodal Development	Working at all levels of Government to ensure sustainable and appropriate intermodal development is recommended.

4.3 High Country Council Tourist Network

In 2007, the High Country Council Group (comprising Baw Baw, Wellington, Mansfield, Alpine, Indigo, Towong and East Gippsland LGAs) developed a priority list of strategic network linkages which, if improved, would provide the most cross regional benefit. These projects were:

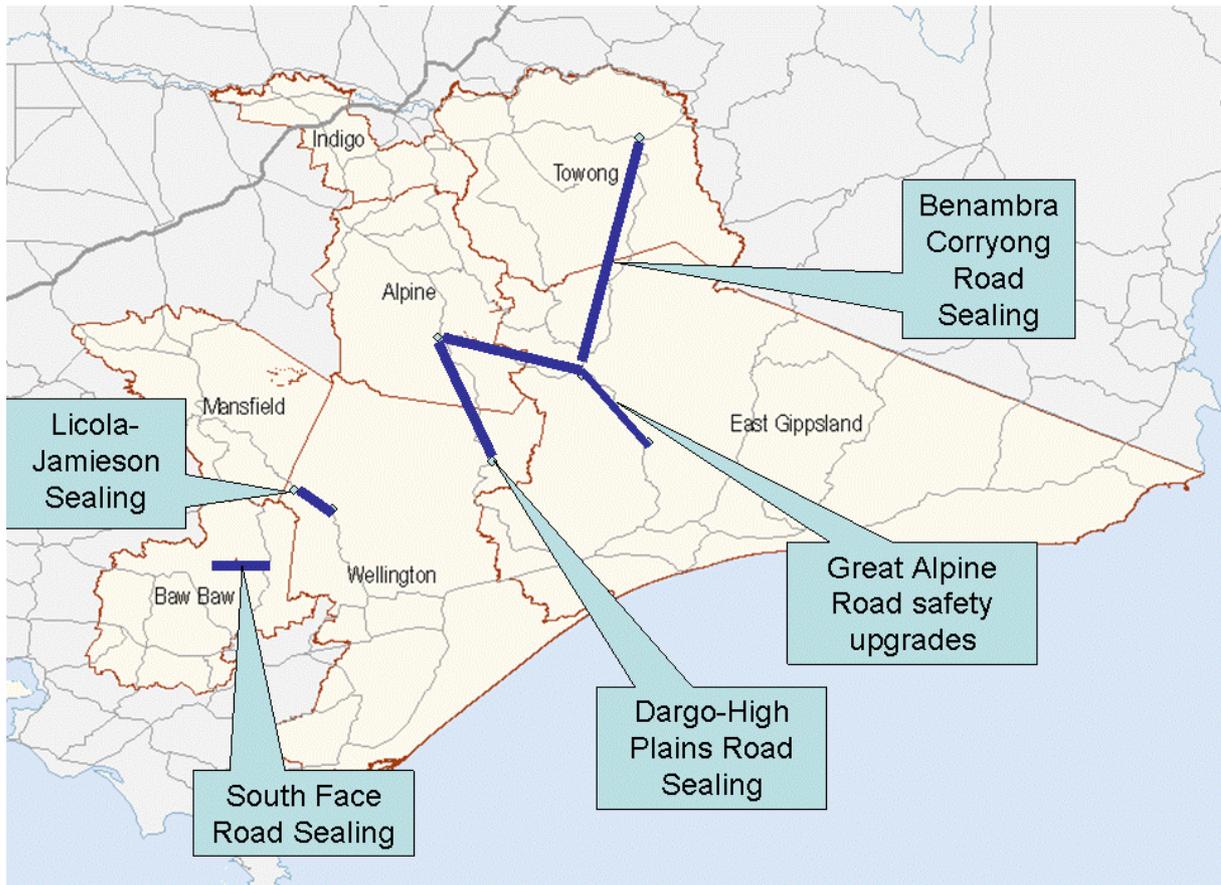
1. The sealing of the Dargo High Plains Road
2. Sealing of Licola–Jamieson Road
3. Safety improvement to the Great Alpine Road
4. Upgrade the sealing of the Benambra Corryong Road
5. Sealing of South Face Road

A strategy for a ‘Hinterland Trail’ as an alternative driving route to the Princes Highway through Merimbula for AWD and 4WD vehicles is still being developed.

Further details are outlined in Table 7.

TABLE 7 STRATEGIC TRANSPORT TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS

Type of project	Project	Indicative project cost estimate \$m	Other industries likely to benefit
Sealing	Sealing of Dargo High Plains Road	\$5.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timber ▪ Emergency Services
Sealing	Sealing of Licola-Jamieson Road	\$10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timber ▪ Emergency Services
State road upgrade	Safety improvements to Great Alpine Road	\$5-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timber ▪ Emergency Services
Sealing	Upgrade the sealing of the Benambra Corryong Road	\$15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timber Industry ▪ Mining Industry ▪ Agricultural Industry
Sealing	Sealing of South Face Road	\$16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timber ▪ Emergency Services



Sealing of Dargo High Plains Road

The Dargo High Plains Road provides tourism access to Dargo and the Alpine National Park via the Dargo High Plains. It enables visitor access to the Grant Historic Area and many campsites at the Upper Dargo as well as a direct summer link from the Princes Highway to North Eastern Victoria.

The road from Dargo to the Great Alpine Road is currently largely unsealed and most recent travel counts estimate at least 80 vehicles per day (off-peak season) utilise the route. Apart from a strategic tourism route, the link also provides access for timber and emergency services vehicles. Sealing the route has been estimated at costing \$5.5 million.

Sealing of Licola–Jamieson Road

This strategic tourism link, between Licola and Jamieson in Wellington Shire provides tourism access to Licola and the Alpine National Park and enables through-traffic from the Princes Highway to link to northeast Victoria. Sealing the Licola–Jamieson section will directly address missed and potential economic yield to the region through increased visitation and expenditure as well as community amenity through road safety improvements and direct access routes to Melbourne and beyond. Out of holiday period traffic numbers are approximately 50–60 per day, while during the high season (summer holidays, Easter and long weekends), the traffic volume can peak at around 500 vehicles per day.

Apart from a strategic tourism route, the link also provides access for timber and emergency services vehicles. Sealing the Licola–Jamieson Link has been estimated at costing \$10 million.

Safety Improvements to the Great Alpine Road

The Great Alpine Road is one of the region’s most spectacular tourist routes. It links Wangaratta on the Hume Freeway with Bairnsdale on the Princes Highway. From Wangaratta the route takes travellers through the Ovens Valley, providing access to Mt Buffalo National Park, before passing through the tourist towns of Bright and Harrietteville to ascend to the major ski resort of Mount Hotham and nearby Dinner Plain. On its descent into East Gippsland the road passes through Omeo, Swifts Creek and Bruthen before reaching Bairnsdale. As the awareness of the route has risen, it has attracted increasing numbers of motorcycle users as well as other private tourist vehicles. Ensuring that route’s safety standards meet the needs of this growing market is imperative to the long-term tourism growth in the region. Indicative costs of such upgrades have been estimated as \$5–10 million.

Upgrade the sealing of the Benambra Corryong Road

The Benambra Corryong Road provides the most direct link between Corryong and the Benambra / Omeo region of East Gippsland. It also provides a link to the Murray Valley Highway. The current standard of the route is “C” Class or less over most of length. Seventy kilometres of the route is unsealed, while 18 kilometres is exposed at 800 metres above sea level. Off-peak season traffic counts are approximately 60 vehicles per day with a high proportion of freight vehicles (the route is used extensively by the agricultural and mining sectors).

The unsealed elements of the route currently make it unsuitable for hire cars, motor homes and international visitor needs. Sealing will provide a key tourism transport link. It is estimated that to re-sheet and seal the 70 kilometres will cost approximately \$15 million.

Sealing of South Face Road

South Face Road was originally built as a timber haulage road but could provide a much needed link for tourism from Mt Baw Baw to the Latrobe Valley. It is currently a gravel road and therefore unsuitable for tourism and most passenger vehicles. It is located near Mt Baw Baw Road and the Tyers/Thompson Valley Road and would link Mt Baw Baw Alpine Village more effectively to these State roads. Estimates of the sealing costs have been placed at \$16 million.

4.4 Submissions by the Gippsland Local Government Network

The GLGN has been active in advocacy and communication of Gippsland transport needs in the broader State and Federal context. This communication role has involved providing submissions to various government reviews such as the Eddington Study into East West Links in Melbourne, the Port of Hastings Strategic Land Use Plan and the Standing Committee Review on linkages to Ports. In these submissions key themes continue to be raised:

The importance of effective road and rail connections not only within Gippsland but between the region and the end destination. This is particularly the case for the current and future ports of Victoria at Hastings, Melbourne and Geelong. However, it is as pertinent for the transport infrastructure that impacts on passenger transport – road and rail connections within and external to the region.

Ensuring that transport developments outside the region do not negatively impact on the productivity of the region's producers or tourism industry has been another part of the GLGN's advocacy role.

4.5 Potential projects identified by the Gippsland Local Government Network

Recently representatives of the GLGN LGA's aggregated their understanding of the current transport priorities for Gippsland. These were classified into those priorities internal to the region and those required to reach external markets and are listed below.

Priorities within the region

1. Town bypasses – Traralgon / Sale / Bairnsdale
2. Princes Highway upgrade – Traralgon to Sale
3. Upgrade status of Princes Highway between Nar Nar Goon and Longwarry
4. Continue upgrades to NSW border
5. Inter-modal facilities – Morwell / Bairnsdale
6. South Gippsland Highway upgrade to include town bypasses for Leongatha and Korumburra together with various local works through to Toora
7. Southern Coastal Drive / Bass Highway
8. South Face Road sealing
9. Timber Roads improvements
10. Timber Bridges upgrades
11. B-double road routes
12. Further Grand Ridge Road work
13. Public Transport Connections – particularly east of Traralgon.

Priorities extending beyond the region's boundaries

1. Road Linkages to Melbourne
2. Rail linkages and bottlenecks to Melbourne
3. Linkages to Sydney and Canberra
4. Road and rail Linkages to the Port of Hastings
5. Koo Wee Rup By-Pass to Pakenham
6. High Country links
7. Access to Barry Point.

4.6 Summary

There is considerable overlap in the priorities outlined in this section. All are strategically important to Gippsland's social, economic and environmental stability. The table below attempts to summarise this long list into potential initiatives, potential sources of funding as discussed in section 3 and a first take assessment on the groups primarily positively affected by the initiative.

TABLE 8 IDENTIFIED PROJECTS, POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING AND GROUPS AFFECTED BY THE DEVELOPMENT

Project name	POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FUNDING								Groups affected by development								
	AusLink / Infrastructure Australia	AusLink Strategic Regional	VicRoads	RIDF - Intermodal	Better Roads Victoria	Private Sector Participation	RIDF - Tourism	RIDF - Timber Roads	Victorian Public Transport Funding	Cattle	Dairy	Aquaculture	Timber	Paper	Energy/minerals	Agriculture	Tourism
1. Town bypasses – Traralgon										✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
2. Town Bypasses – Sale										✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
3. Town Bypasses – Bairnsdale										✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
4. Town Bypasses – Leongatha										✓	✓			✓			✓
5. Town Bypasses – Korumburra										✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
6. Princes Highway upgrade: Traralgon to Sale										✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
7. Upgrade status of Princes Highway (PH) between Nar Nar Goon and Longwarry										✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
8. Continue upgrades of PH to NSW border												✓	✓		✓		✓
9. Inter-modal facilities – Morwell											✓		✓	✓			
10. Intermodal facilities – Bairnsdale											✓		✓		✓		
11. South Gippsland Highway upgrades with various local works through to Toora										✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Project name	POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FUNDING									Groups affected by development								
	AusLink / Infrastructure Australia	AusLink Strategic Regional	VicRoads	RIDF - Intermodal	Better Roads Victoria	Private Sector Participation	RIDF - Tourism	RIDF - Timber Roads	Victorian Public Transport Funding	Cattle	Dairy	Aquaculture	Timber	Paper	Energy/minerals	Agriculture	Tourism	Community
12. Southern Coastal Drive / Bass Highway										✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
13. South Face Road sealing																	✓	✓
14. Timber Roads												✓						
15. Timber Bridges									✓	✓		✓		✓				
16. Further Grand Ridge Road work																	✓	
17. B - double road routes									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18. Public Transport Connections – particularly east of Traralgon														✓		✓	✓	
18. Rail linkages and bottlenecks to Melbourne											✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
22. Road and rail linkages to the Port of Hastings											✓		✓	✓	✓			
23. Koo Wee Rup Bypass to Pakenham									✓	✓	✓	✓						
24. High Country links																	✓	✓
25. Access to Barry Point (Port Gippsland)												✓		✓				
26. Cycle Lanes/Tracks																	✓	✓

5. REGIONAL PRIORITIES

In determining regional priorities, GLGN has been particularly mindful of the funding criteria of significant funding bodies/government, as well as of the existing regional commitments, particularly in SEATS. As with the 2005 Gippsland Transport Strategy, analysis of the projects and issues discussed in the previous section against the priorities outlined in the policy documents and funding methods outlined in section 3 was undertaken. This analysis has been completed in order to determine which transport proposals are likely to have the greatest impact on Gippsland's economic, social and environmental sustainability.

This prioritisation does not preclude pursuit of other priorities as listed in this paper, rather the priorities highlighted in this chapter are those deemed most appropriate for the Gippsland Local Government Network to take to broader stakeholders as those that will have the most long-term impact on the productivity of the region.

The highest priorities for the Gippsland Local Government Network to take to the broader stakeholder group of the Victorian and Federal Government are as follows:

- Further develop effective road and rail linkages into Melbourne and to the ACT and NSW to ensure efficient movement of freight and people.
- Further develop effective road and rail linkages to ensure efficient movement of freight to the Port of Hastings.
- Ensure that the Barry Point facility is suitably safeguarded to allow inward movements of project cargo.
- Further develop intermodal connection points at Morwell and Bairnsdale.
- Ensure that the inter-regional connectivity of the road network in Gippsland meets the growing demands placed on it by the various industry sectors.

5.1 Road and rail linkages into Melbourne, ACT and NSW

This priority incorporates consideration of the major external linkages from the region to the major domestic and international markets for its goods.

In terms of freight, the Princes Highway and South Gippsland Corridors provide the key links to the Melbourne market, while the Monaro Highway provides a key freight route to the ACT. The broad gauge rail link to Melbourne provides passenger and freight travel within and out of the region.

To be effective, these links need to manage the passenger, tourism and freight demand with adequate and growing supply.

5.1.1 Princes Highway: Gippsland–Melbourne

Freight Demand

The 2007 AusLink Melbourne–Sale Corridor Strategy details the freight demand on the Princes Highway as follows:

The Princes Highway is at the centre of a complex freight task within the Latrobe Valley and broader Gippsland region:

- *due to the amount of value-adding undertaken within the Gippsland region, freight flows on the Melbourne–Sale Corridor are multi-directional, with large volumes of freight moved within the region. The corridor plays a critical role in the local movement of goods (especially dairy and timber products) for processing within the region and for local distribution of consumer goods and production inputs (such as fertiliser, fuel and stock feed); and*
- *the link to Melbourne is also critical to regional industry. More than two-thirds of finished products move in a westerly direction, reflecting the importance of the link to Melbourne for freight flows to consumption points within Melbourne, north and west Victoria, and Australia as a whole. The link also plays an important role in connecting Gippsland output to the Ports of Melbourne and Geelong, and to Melbourne Airport. Freight carriers from the region use the Monash-Westgate Freeway within the Melbourne metropolitan area to connect with the Port of Melbourne. The yearly export-related task is estimated at approximately 600,000 tonnes. In addition, an estimated 750,000 tonnes is moved from Melbourne each year to the major centres of Morwell, Warragul, Moe, Traralgon and Sale.*

Because of the complexity, the overall size of the freight task is difficult to determine, but is estimated at more than six million tonnes a year.

The Corridor Strategy (2007) details the key supply chains that move along the corridor.

Chain	Total Tonnes (000's)	Average Distance Travelled (km)	Tonne-kilometres(million)
Coal	40	94	3.8
Dairy	795	76	60.4
Fertiliser	155	78	12.1
Food and Groceries	300	96	28.8
Forestry	2142	85	182.1
Fuel	296	96	28.4
Horticulture	90	101	9.1
Quarrying	2550	45	114.8

Stock feed, as an input to the dairy industry, is also expected to add 480,000 tonnes into the Gippsland region per annum most of it traveling into the region via the Princes Highway. Other major horticultural freight movements include those related to the livestock and poultry sectors

Passenger Demand

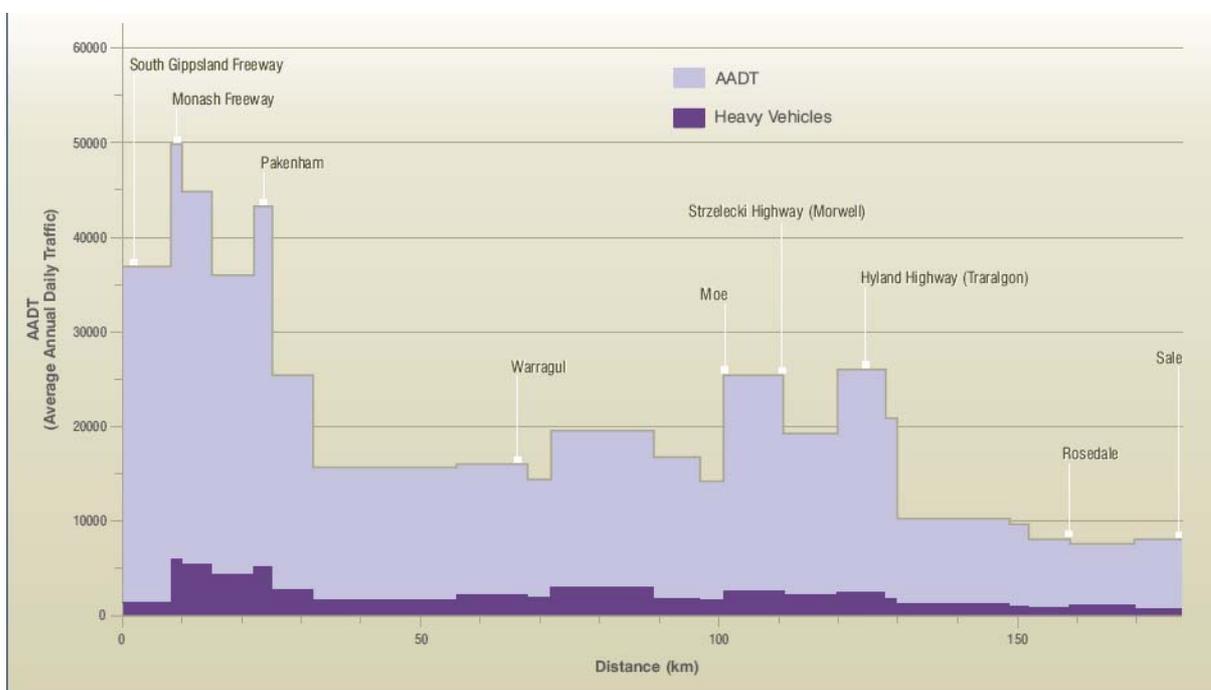
Passenger travel on the route is a function of both tourism related movements and private travel. There is large volumes of urban commuting between the towns on the Princes Highway in Gippsland and, as detailed in Figure 6 passenger travel increases significantly as the corridor approaches Melbourne. In 1999, origin–destination data from Melbourne– Sale indicated that car travel was by far the most popular mode of travel (BTRE Working Paper 66, 2006).

Capacity of the corridor

The AusLink Corridor Strategy (2007) determined that the capacity of the Princes Highway between Melbourne and Sale “generally meets current demand”. That said, it was noted that heavy traffic conditions were often present as a result of the large freight task and the proximity of major towns. Initiatives such as the Traralgon Bypass, Pakenham Bypass, the Monash Freeway Upgrades and the Traralgon–Sale Duplication should assist in allaying these heavy traffic conditions considerably.

Forecasts by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (BTRE) predicts high growth in AADT particularly in the Melbourne–Traralgon section with a growing proportion of heavy vehicle traffic on the route. Medium-term capacity concerns were highlighted as a challenge for the corridor.

FIGURE 6 PRINCES HIGHWAY EAST TO SALE AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC 2005



Source: AusLink Melbourne–Sale Corridor Strategy, 2007

Action

The Princes Highway connection between Melbourne and Gippsland is the key freight route for the region for both intraregional and interregional movements. The economic sustainability of Gippsland is inextricably linked with the route and capacity constraints within Gippsland or to the east of Warragul will severely impact on the regional product of Gippsland. Ongoing monitoring of the capacity of this route and advocacy by the Gippsland Local Government Network is required for timely infrastructure investment both within Gippsland and between Gippsland and Melbourne.

5.1.2 South Gippsland Highway: Gippsland–Melbourne

Freight Demand

The South Gippsland Highway extends for a distance of 258 kilometres from Dandenong (Berwick) to Sale. It provides access between Melbourne and Cranbourne, the east coast of Westernport Bay, Phillip Island, the Bass Coast (via Bass Highway) and the agricultural regions of South Gippsland. It also provides access to Korumburra, Leongatha, Foster, Yarram, Sale and Victoria's major oil and gas platforms, which are serviced from Longford and the port facility located at Barry Beach.

In terms of tourism, the South Gippsland Highway provides connections to Phillip Island, Wilsons Promontory and Tarra Bulga National Park.

Significant freight movements that traverse this route include:

- Timber, particularly between Yarram and the Hyland Highway to the mill in Yarram and the Australian Paper Mill at Maryvale
- Dairy produce to factories in Leongatha and then finished dairy product for export from Melbourne. Murray Goulburn alone accounts 32 return trips a day on the South Gippsland Highway (Department of Infrastructure, 2008). They also utilise the route to move inputs of other equipment and services, and materials such as: packaging cartons, tubs for butter, pallets for transportation purposes and bulk bags.
- Livestock movements to regional market Koonwarra
- Materials and product are freighted for light engineering centres in Korumburra and Leongatha
- Vegetables from farms on or adjacent to the Highway
- Sand and other quarry products from near Lang Lang and Grantville to service the Melbourne market
- Export meat is from an abattoir near Lance Creek
- Fish from fleets at Port Welshpool and Port Albert
- Inputs to the oil and gas industry to and from Barry Beach and the terminal at Longford.

Passenger demand

Apart from the demand for private travel by the residents of the major towns on the South Gippsland corridor there is a large tourism related demand for the corridor as it provides the only link to the South Gippsland coastal region and the Wilson's Promontory National Park.

There is little alternative to car and coach travel for the region serviced by the South Gippsland Highway.

Capacity

Volumes on the Highway measured more than seven years ago vary from 40,000 vehicles per day (vpd) north of Cranbourne, 4,500 vpd between Korumburra and Leongatha and 600 vpd between Woodside and Longford. The percentage of commercial vehicles was estimated at approximately 14 per cent commercial vehicles.

The growth of project cargo to service the construction of the desalination plant at Wonthaggi and the growing Gippsland energy sector as well as the development of the Port of Hastings is likely to significantly impact on the capacity of the South Gippsland Highway between now and 2020. Furthermore, the region is experiencing higher than average population growth as a result of the sea-change tree-change effect.

Infrastructure investment priorities for the route include those highlighted in the Victorian Government's submission to Infrastructure Australia, in particular bypasses of Korumburra and Leongatha.

Action

The South Gippsland connection between Melbourne and Southern Gippsland is a key freight and passenger route for the Southern Gippsland region and is likely to experience higher than average growth in both passenger and freight-related demand over the next fifteen to twenty years. Progressing the bypasses of Korumburra and Leongatha is a priority for Gippsland as is monitoring the volumes and types of movements that this route is experiencing to ensure that safety standards are not jeopardised. If freight demand increases as a result of the growing Gippsland energy sector and the development of the Port of Hastings for both container and bulk products, the South Gippsland Highway may well require further infrastructure investment. It is therefore in the interest of the whole of Gippsland to ensure that this Highway does not become a key productivity bottleneck to the region.

5.1.3 Princes Highway: Gippsland–Sydney

Freight Demand

The Princes Highway also operates as the major freight transport route to the Sydney and Sapphire Coast markets of New South Wales. The movement of food and rural products from the Mitchell–Snowy region of East Gippsland to the adjacent lower South Coast region of NSW is the largest single road movement of agricultural and rural products out of the State.

Important freight movements noted in the 2005 Gippsland Strategy are still current and include:

- Horticulture to the Sydney and Brisbane markets
- Potatoes from Central Gippsland to Sydney and Brisbane via Monaro Highway
- Timber from the East Gippsland region between Nowa Nowa and the NSW border to the Port of Eden for export
- Timber from the Victorian central highlands and from Central Gippsland to the Maryvale Paper Mill
- Fish from Lakes Entrance to Sydney
- Rural supplies to provincial towns

- Quarry products movements.
- Input freight movements such as fertiliser and stockfeed.

Passenger Demand

Car and coach transport dominates this element of the network for passenger movements due to the lack of alternatives east of Bairnsdale. There is significant tourism demand on the network as a result of the large volumes of travellers accessing the eastern Gippsland and Sapphire coast regions.

Capacity

The Traralgon–Sale Duplication will improve traffic movements on the length of the corridor significantly and traffic volumes to the west of Sale do not currently warrant major infrastructure upgrades. The prioritised Sale and Bairnsdale truck bypasses and safety outcomes will also improve traffic movement if progressed. VicRoads has ongoing works to improve the capacity and levels of service on the corridor to the NSW border and the NSW RTA is progressing a corridor strategy for the remainder of the network connection to Wollongong.

Action

The Princes Highway connection between Melbourne and Sydney is a key freight network connection for the region for both intra-regional and inter-regional movements. The economic sustainability of Gippsland, particularly Eastern Gippsland, is linked with the route and capacity constraints within Gippsland or on the NSW element of the Highway will impact on the regional product of the Gippsland. The Gippsland Local Government Network will monitor the capacity of this route and advocate for timely infrastructure investment both within Gippsland and between Gippsland and Sydney.

5.1.4 Monaro Highway: Gippsland–NSW and the ACT

Freight Demand

Currently, the agricultural and timber industry utilise this B-double route to move fruit and vegetables to Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra and timber/chips for export at Eden. The Highway supports a number of other industries in its vicinity including dairying, beef cattle and timber.

Passenger Demand

As well as providing access for residents along the route, the Monaro Highway is a key tourism link for Gippsland. It connects to the Princes Highway and the Snowy Mountains Highway and provides access to the NSW Alpine Resorts and Kosciuszko National Parks. It also provides access to the Hume Highway and Sydney. The Highway attracts a growing number of passenger and tourist vehicles wishing to access east Gippsland or Southern NSW/Canberra markets.

Capacity

The Highway currently operates as a two lane, two way rural highway which begins in the flat open country on the Cann River floodplain before climbing into moderately hilly terrain approaching the NSW border.

Although recorded traffic volumes are considered moderate, with approximately 400 vpd, the proportion of heavy vehicles which utilise the route is relatively high at 30 per cent.

Action

Ensuring that the full link of the Monaro provides adequate capacity now and into the future requires a coordinated approach between all levels of Government. Although priority infrastructure investment includes key upgrades to the link north of the NSW border, the link has a strategic importance to the timber, horticulture and tourism industries of Gippsland. Therefore, the Gippsland Local Government Network will continue to advocate for the bottlenecks outside of the region to be removed. Any cost-effective investment to mitigate the curved alignments and lack of overtaking opportunities in the section between Cann River and the Victorian border should also be progressed with VicRoads.

5.1.5 Rail linkages: Bairnsdale to Melbourne

Passenger Demand

The broad gauge connection between Melbourne and Bairnsdale is a key link in Gippsland's Transport Network. The success of Regional Fast Rail and the reintroduction of passenger rail services to Bairnsdale has sizeably increased the importance of the rail mode in terms of passenger transport share and to variable levels mitigates the passengers transport demand on the Princes Highway between Melbourne and Bairnsdale. There is potential to improve rail services for patrons East of Traralgon by linking Bairnsdale/Sale to Traralgon with the Sprinter or Velocity timetables.

Freight Demand

Freight currently moved on the broad gauge network is limited to containerised paper product from Maryvale to Melbourne, and logs from Bairnsdale to Geelong.

Capacity

Since the 2005 Strategy the capacity of the broad gauge network has been significantly enhanced with the improvement works related to the introduction of Regional Fast Rail Services. The success of Regional Fast Rail and the number of train paths this and the other passenger services require has already resulted in some paper products moving by road to Melbourne.

There are also capacity constraints on the Sale–Bairnsdale link in the rail corridor which are also limiting any potential increase in rail passenger services on this link.

Current capacity of the network will not meet future potential demand for rail services stemming from:

1. Potential bulk energy exports
2. Potential increased containerised goods such as dairy
3. Greater passenger demand from Gippsland to access markets, services and employment opportunities along the rail route to Melbourne
4. Potential movement of labour from Melbourne and its outskirts to service a growing employment base in Gippsland particularly in the energy sector.

Action

The rail broad gauge connection is a key link in Gippsland's Transport Network that, as freight and passenger demand grows, will face, capacity constraints which are likely to become a major bottleneck to Gippsland's long-term economic productive potential and social connectivity. Ensuring that the link provides enough capacity for growing passenger and freight demands is a crucial priority for the Gippsland Local Government Network.

5.2 Effective road and rail linkages to the Port of Hastings

The Port of Hastings has been earmarked for future container port development, once capacity at the Port of Melbourne is reached. Under this plan Hastings would act as supplement to the Port of Melbourne rather than a replacement.

In parallel to this development the following infrastructure linkages will need to be advanced.

Road access

The Transport Access Corridor Planning Study developed by the Port of Hastings puts forward the following road access plan:

- The predominant freight corridor being an upgraded Western Port Highway connecting to the South Gippsland Freeway at Lyndhurst and onto the M1 to the east of Dandenong.
- Access to Gippsland via the Tyabb–Tooradin road onto the South Gippsland Highway (M420) and up to the Princes Highway via Koo Wee Rup Road.

Whichever logistic option is determined as the most appropriate, the port development, coupled with increased exports from Wellington Shire, brings forward the need for duplication of the Traralgon–Sale M1 road link currently scheduled for completion by 2012.

Rail access

Part of the Transport Access Corridor Planning Study involves an improved rail link between Gippsland and the Port of Hastings. Until this link is completed, the ability for Gippsland freight to access the Port of Hastings by rail is severely constrained.

Action

Gippsland is strategically positioned to have efficient transport connections to the Port of Hastings given the port's location to the south-east of Melbourne. It is therefore imperative that the connections between Gippsland and the Port of Hastings remain enablers rather than hurdles to Gippsland's regional economic productivity.

The importance of these transport links grows as new economic development opportunities in the region lead to strong growth forecasts in the region's export task. The GLGN therefore will work to ensure that proposed linkages do not lead to new bottlenecks for supply chains which could effectively utilise the Port of Hastings.

5.3 Ensure that Barry Point is suitably safeguarded to allow inward movements of project cargo

As discussed in section 1 of this strategy, the predicted growth in Gippsland's minerals and energy sector as a driver of future economic prosperity for the region is one of the main drivers of change discussed in this update.

The development of new operations in this sector has brought a very specialised and particular freight task into the region – the movement of 'prefabricated project cargo units' (usually built overseas and shipped as final units).

The carriage of these cargoes usually involves irregular movements of over-dimension and over-weight units and requires particular consideration of how the project cargoes arrive in Victoria and move within Gippsland to final location – the production facility.

GRID has undertaken preliminary work on the route options available to the movement of project cargo. Preliminary conclusions are that the most cost effective solution for moving project cargo is to barge units into the Barry's Beach facility and transfer units to heavy vehicles for transport on either the current network or through new purpose-built routes to final location. Therefore, it is likely that growth in this new sector will be accompanied by an increase in heavy vehicles transporting pipes and other equipment for servicing the offshore rigs. Such an increase in traffic can be expected to impact on non-port infrastructure. Major upgrades will be required to roads and bridges to support that type of operation.

Action

Without a 'no-regrets strategy', new export and industry opportunities from the energy sector could be stymied by the current transport network capacity. This is a particular issue in ensuring that project cargo can effectively access and move within Gippsland to its final destination. Given that Barry's Beach may well be the most cost-effective access point for over-mass and over-dimension project cargo, it is important that this facility is maintained as an access option. This will require review of any potential conflicting development of the facility which could stymie barging access opportunities. Furthermore, GLGN will work to ensure that landside infrastructure accommodates the projected heavy vehicle increase.

5.4 Intermodal connection points at Morwell and Bairnsdale

Intermodal terminal points are key nodes in any supply chain. Inefficient nodes can effectively mitigate any potential benefits mainline or road investment through inadequate capacity at the intermodal crossover point.

The Victorian Rail Freight Network Review report (2007) highlighted the trend towards hubbing, and supported initiatives to accelerate and enhance regional and outer metropolitan hubbing adjacent to the rail network as a way of helping achieve modal share targets.

Appropriate operational access provisions are also important to the effectiveness of intermodal terminals. There are three key access issues. The first and foremost is that a common user facility is the preferred model for any terminal. This implies common access from both rail and road operators and a terminal operator who does not discriminate between operators. There is an opposing school of thought that argues that technical efficiency and scale economies will often preclude multiple operators into a terminal. On balance it is considered that the common user access provides a sustainable facility for those users with competitive freight contracts who are concerned not to place their freight contract choices at risk through a vertically integrated terminal operation.

Road–rail freight terminals are located at Bairnsdale and Morwell. The revitalisation of the Morwell facility or Gippsland Logistics Precinct is currently being spear-headed by the Latrobe City Council.

Coupled with the facility at Morwell is the proposal to develop an East Gippsland road–rail freight terminal at Bairnsdale. It is envisaged that the Bairnsdale facility could consolidate logging and timber operations and expand as required to meet a growing intermodal freight task, which could well consist of bulk or containerised mineral products.

Action

The current and future growing demand for rail export movements described in this study necessitates effective intermodal connection points with appropriate access arrangements. The Gippsland Logistics Precinct at Morwell is best served to meet this need and to ensure that rail export potential is not stymied by a lack of transfer points and supporting facilities. The Gippsland Local Government Network will therefore support the efforts of the Latrobe City Council to progress the revitalisation of this facility. In the longer term a broader role for an intermodal connection facility in Bairnsdale is likely to be required. Ensuring that land use planning and transport policy does not constrain this opportunity is required.

5.5 Inter-regional connectivity of the road network in Gippsland

As discussed throughout this strategy update, the effectiveness of the transport network to any chain is effectively constrained by its most inefficient point. Industries of economic and social importance to Gippsland have recognised this issue and have begun to identify the Gippsland road network bottlenecks that most impact on their productivity – the work of TIRES is but one such example. The work of the Gippsland Local Government Network in developing its strategic regional funding submission to AusLink is a more prudent example. As a result of this process the LGAs that comprise the Gippsland Local Government Network effectively disregard their borders and consider as a whole which infrastructure upgrades to the road network would improve the prosperity of the region on a whole of industry basis.

In the area of tourism, Northern Gippsland has already progressed down this path with the priorities identified in the High Country Council Tourism Network Study. And, as an element of the SEATS the GLGN has identified the strategic transport network priorities for the whole of the SEATS region.

Action

The previous priorities discussed in this chapter have indicated those network elements that particularly impact on Gippsland's access out of the region. Continuing this network and cross-

supply chain approach to transport priority development to inter-regional connectivity is imperative to the prosperity of Gippsland. A number of interregional priorities have already been identified, in particular:

- Sealing of Dargo High Plains Road*
- Sealing of Licola–Jamieson Road*
- Safety improvements to Great Alpine Road*
- Upgrade the sealing of the Benambra Corryong Road*
- Sealing of South Face Road.*

Internally the Gippsland Local Government Network will build on this work and complete the identification of key local road routes that require infrastructure upgrades to meet high productivity vehicle requirements. The importance of this initiative is amplified by COAG commitment to implementation of performance based standards (PBS) or for access by high productivity heavy vehicles. The COAG agreement requires all States and Territories to declare their networks according to PBS classifications. The proposed GLGN inventory of bridges and roads is aligned to meeting this requirement.

Classifying roads and bridges according to PBS applications will highlight where bridge inadequacies are the only impediment to establishment of an otherwise viable route. This transparency will enhance the prospects of gaining funding support to remedy ‘missing links’ in the infrastructure network.

5.6 Implementation and Communication Strategies

The Implementation Strategy that was devised for the previous study contains significant currency. In particular GLGN has therefore begun to focus effort on the following cornerstones.

1. Provide well constructed and timely delivery of funding proposals and submissions: specialising in novel and influential marketing tools at different levels of influence

Related to the first cornerstone, the GLGN needs to demonstrate its ability to deliver to completion on-time, robust designs, applications and projects. Work completed since 2005 in this area indicates an ability to achieve this.

2. Establish the DaB technique: ‘Design and Bank’ transport proposals that may be rolled out at short notice for last minute funding opportunities

The reality of large funding agencies is they often have difficulty spending their allocations. This is for a variety of reasons but in many cases there is a scamper to find legitimate capital works projects on which to spend a certain amount prior to some fiscal cut off date such as the end of financial year. The organisation that can demonstrate that they have plans, approvals, and contractual documentation in place, are very welcome at this time. Again there is a cost to this preparedness but the up side is the potential for developing a reputation for being a reliable fall-back in these circumstances.

3. Pursue opportunities for collaboration wherever possible

The success of the Bridges Across Gippsland Strategic Regional Funding Application and the requirements of many other funding process put emphasis on the importance of collaboration to achieve success. This extends to advocacy and communication of the needs of Gippsland to the broader audience.

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